

# VOICES FROM THE PAST

Personal Accounts of Life in Russia, 1917~1945

Volume One



OREST M. GLADKY

# Voices From the Past

A Collection of Short Stories  
Preserving Facts and Thoughts  
For Posterity to Pause and Ponder

1917-1971

In Whose Name?

The Dispossessed

I Believe

The Enemies of the People

The Humdrum Life in Socialist Paradise

Behind the Iron Curtain

By Orest M. Gladky

Olga Gladky Verro, Editor  
Oliver W. Kellogg, English Editor

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Author Orest M. Gladky  
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Translated from the Orest Mikhailovich Gladky's Russian collection of stories  
*Golosa is proshlogo: Sbornik isbrannykh rasskazov sokhraniayushchikh facty i mysli dlya  
poslyedyuyushchikh  
pocoleniy prochitat', priostanovitsa i podumat'.*

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(Insert here Orest M. Gladky photo 1, large size)

**Orest Mikhailovich Gladky (1902-1986)**





## About the Author

Orest Mikhaylovich Gladky was born on October 29, 1902 in Nikitovka, a settlement of a big railroad station in the South of Russia in the Donets coal mine region of the Eastern Ukraine.

His father, Mikhail Makarovich Gladky, was a head telegrapher on the railroad station of Nikitovka and rector of a choir in the local Russian Orthodox Church.

His grandfather, Makar Timofeyevich Gladky, a railroad switchman at Nikitovka station, was born a free peasant (as opposed to a serf peasant in bondage to the land owner) in the nearby village of Alexyeyevka. After serving twenty years as an enlisted man in the Russian Imperial Army, he chose not to return to till the soil and instead used the opportunity offered to the soldiers returning to the civilian life to become a civil servant. Orest's paternal grandmother, Yelena Danylovna (no one in the family remembered her maiden last name), was a simple townswoman from the nearby town of Bakhmut.

Orest's mother, Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Gladky, was Principal and a teacher of the local Railroad School. She and her sister became orphans when they were very young. When their parents, by the name of Mikhnyevich, of Russianized Polish descent and Muscovite nobility, died, the sisters were raised in an orphanage in Moscow for the children of noble families. There they received Christian upbringing, a good education and graduated with teaching diplomas, ready to start careers in education.

Both parents of Orest M. Gladky were very devoted Christians, they loved Russia, were very active in the cultural life of Nikitovka and reared their children with the same spirit – belief in God, devotion to Motherland and service to community.

After finishing the Railroad School in Nikitovka, Orest and his older sister, Anna, studied in the gymnasiums in Taganrog, a town on the Azov Sea, and returned to Nikitovka only for the last year of studies when a gymnasium was opened there on the eve of the revolution.

As a teenager Orest Gladky had an early encounter with the horrors of the revolution when the large and important station of Nikitovka changed hands from the Whites to the Reds. After seizing the station, the Red commissars soon showed their brutality and lawlessness by committing atrocities. They killed Nikitovka's station master, who was a friend of Gladky's family, and they burned alive the eleven men captured at the station, White officers who were dressed in civilian clothing, an execution witnessed by the young Orest.

No wonder then, when the Whites had recaptured Nikitovka, not-yet-sixteen-year-old Orest and many of his gymnasium friends enrolled as volunteers in the White Army to save Russia from the Bolsheviks. They enrolled with the blessings of their parents, who considered it to be a better choice for their sons than to be conscripted and forced to fight for the Soviets with the despised Reds should they re-occupy Nikitovka.

Orest M. Gladky and his friends served in the Volunteer White Army in Drozdovsky divisions, which participated in the battles defending Crimea from the

pressure of the amassed Red battalions concentrated in the South of Russia. The White units left the battlefield when the Red avalanche could be stopped only by the superhuman strength now drained away by the exhausting campaign.

In the fall of 1920 a portion of White Army left the Russian soil and went into exile. But there were not enough ships to transport them all and those who remained on the southern shore of Crimea were doomed to suffer and die from the savage reprisals of the Red commissars. Among those left behind was Drozdovsky Army volunteer Orest M. Gladky, who remained on the shore of the Black Sea in Feodosia.

Orest survived by hiding in the home of his paternal uncle, who at that time was an assistant railroad station master in Feodosia. Then, with the help of friends, he returned to his native Nikitovka. But, as a former White Army volunteer, his documents were stamped in an indelible ink with the condemning word – *lishenyets* – deprived of the right to vote. After that Orest M. Gladky was pursued by the Bolshevik secret police as a disenfranchised “enemy of the people” owing to his age sixteen Civil War service in the White Army. He and his family became pawns of the Bolshevik regime in that tumultuous odyssey in which they were relentlessly hounded from place to place in their native Ukraine by the Soviet State watchdogs – CheKa, GPU, KGB and NKVD.

No wonder then, when the Germans occupied Ukraine in 1941 during World War Two and allowed the local newspaper, “New Ukraine,” to be printed, Orest M. Gladky wrote one after another anti-soviet articles, in which he poured out his accumulated hatred for the regime that hounded him for all those years, denouncing the crimes of the oppressive dictatorship of Stalin, and expressing hopes for a liberated and free Russia. But he was naively wrong – the Germans had another vision for Ukraine as a Lebensraum for Germany and therefore his articles were no longer allowed to be printed.

Then, in the summer of 1943, when the Wermacht under the pressure of the Soviet Army was retreating, Orest was arrested and sent to a Gestapo concentration camp. In the fall his wife and daughter found him there in a deplorable condition. But with the help of three humane German men, he was placed in a hospital prisoner ward in Makheyevka. When the front line came very close, wife and daughter helped him to escape. The three of them reached Stalino (now Donetsk) in time to board a convoy train of conscripted workers from Ukraine ready to depart to Germany. They got on it – it was his and their only choice other than for him either to be caught by the Gestapo as an escapee from the German concentration camp or to be caught by the NKVD as an “enemy of the people” and for his anti-soviet articles in the Ukrainian newspaper and to be sent to a Soviet concentration camp.

From 1943 to 1945 they worked as conscripted workers, Ostarbeitern, in Germany. But in the cold winter of 1945 the advancing Soviet Army was already on Polish territory annexed by the Germans in the beginning of the war and the Gladkys, who were working there, decided that Orest must not be caught by the Soviet secret police. On the insistence of his wife and daughter Orest left, escaping across Germany until he reached the Zone occupied by the Allies. And then, even when he believed it to be safe, he had to hide under an assumed name of a Ukrainian born in Poland, to avoid being handed by the Allies to the NKVD agents for the forced deportation of Soviet citizens to the Soviet concentration camps.

Meanwhile, Orest’s daughter was smuggled by her sweetheart onto the Red Cross repatriation convoy train for Italian prisoners of war to Italy, where they married.

And Orest's wife, after hiding for one year with a Polish family, was able with their help to join him in a DP camp in the Allied zone of Germany. The two of them, as hundreds of thousands of others, waited for several years in the UNRRA and IRO camps as DPs (displaced persons) for the country that would give them asylum.

While waiting in the UNRRA camp, Orest M. Gladky started his newfound freedom as a writer. His writing flourished further in England, which accepted them as refugees.

In 1958 he and his wife immigrated to the United States, where they finally found security and freedom. His daughter, Olga, and her husband, Giulio Verro, with their two children, daughter Lia and son Piero, immigrated to the United States, joining her parents, in 1959.

Orest M. Gladky was a prolific writer of stories describing the life of people in the Soviet Union and the evils and horrors of the Bolshevik-communist-socialist regime. Many of the stories were written from the real life episodes that happened to the author, his family, friends and acquaintances—the real names were concealed for the safety of the people remaining behind the Iron Curtain from being harmed by the NKVD and KGB, the Soviet State watchdogs.

His stories and articles were printed under the pseudonyms of O. Mikhailov, R. Mikhnyevich and R. Chongar in the Russian immigrant press, newspapers and journals, in England, New York, San Francisco and Buenos Aires. He never lost hope that one day Russia would rise again and free herself from the yoke of socialism-communism and Stalin's dictatorship.

In his writings he warns and predicts: "The world should fear Communism in itself. Russia got to know it with millions of victims, with rivers of blood and tears, and she herself will shake off the red beast in a year predetermined not by us..."

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Works of Orest M. Gladky, as those of many immigrant writers whose destiny allowed them to escape after World War Two from the paws of the Soviet secret police, remained in the domain of the immigrant press, rarely being translated or published in English for lack of interest of traditional publishers and lack of funds for independent publishing by the authors themselves.

When Orest M. Gladky's declining health took a turn for the worse in 1980's, he brought the whole collection of his writings to me, his daughter, Olga Gladky Verro, and asked me to do what I thought would be the best for preserving his works for the future generations. In my retirement years, I edited and prepared for publication, both in Russian and in English, a two-volume collection of more than 220 stories written by my father: the first volume is *Voices From the Past: A Collection of Short Stories Preserving Facts and Thoughts for Posterity to Pause and Ponder* and the second volume is *Portraits from an Old Album: Places and Events, Creatures Big and Small and Lots of People Most of All*.

After many years of work I am publishing in Russian and in English the first volume of stories, *Voices From the Past*, and finally fulfilling my father's wish to see his works made available to the new generation, so they would not forget the tragic events in Russian history and the life of people struggling to survive under the socialist-communist dictatorship. I was able to complete this work with the help of a team of translators and, most of all, with the support and generous editorial help of my dear

friend Oliver W. Kellogg, the English Editor. He provided invaluable advice, encouragement and guidance and completed with great patience several rounds of editing of all English manuscripts.

– *Olga Gladky Verro, Editor.*



# Voices From the Past

**A Collection of Short Stories  
Preserving Facts and Thoughts  
For Posterity to Pause and Ponder**

**1917-1971**

## **In Whose Name?**

Civil war engulfs the Motherland,  
White Army volunteers defend the Holy Russia from the Reds

## **The Dispossessed**

Stalin reneges on the promise of the revolution: "All land to the peasants!"  
and launches onslaught on peasants through forced farm collectivization

## **I Believe**

Communists implement the Marxist dogma to eradicate belief in God,  
they close churches, kill and send clergymen to the concentration camps  
and conduct relentless anti-religious propaganda

## **The Enemies of the People**

State secret police watchdogs relentlessly search for the suspected "enemies of the  
people"  
and send millions without trial to prisons and gulags  
to suffer and die from forced labor, cold, hunger and disease

## **The Humdrum Life in Socialist Paradise**

Snapshots of ordinary citizen's weekdays in the Socialist-Communist state  
and their struggle to survive under Soviet rule and Bolshevik dictatorship

## **Behind the Iron Curtain**

After World War Two, Cold War Years and Collective Leadership in Soviet Union

**By Orest M. Gladky**

Olga Gladky Verro, Editor  
Oliver W. Kellogg, English Editor





*Dedicated in memory of millions  
who perished in the tragic years  
when the bloody hands of the Bolsheviks  
were building the first socialist-communist “paradise”  
on the soil of Russia.*

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# In Whose Name?

Civil War engulfs the Motherland.  
White Army volunteers defend  
the Holy Russia from the Reds.

*Dedicated to the memory of those  
who suffered and those who died  
during the Revolution  
at the hands of Bolsheviks.*



## Prologue – In Whose Name?

February of 1917

Perhaps, you remember the winter of that year in the southern part of Russia? It was snowy and mild. Somewhere, far away at the western front, in deep trenches covered in snow, Russian soldiers defended their motherland from the enemy, the Germans. They were sacrificing their blood, their very lives in Russia's name. Those who were on the home front, suffered along with them.

Wartime – it is a difficult trial in the life of the country, but everyone knew that enduring it meant to prevail, meant preserving the honor and glory of Russia. Therefore those small inconveniences that appeared that year were accepted by the people on the home front quietly as inevitable adversity they had to bear. "At the war front, the soldiers are suffering much more than we do here," they were replying to those who attempted to complain about difficult life while standing in an occasional line for provisions.

Yes, that's how it was.

Do you remember that southern winter evening, when soft flakes of fluffy snow, spinning slowly, descended to the ground? They fell on the faces of the passers-by, on their eyelashes and eyebrows, covering their caps, hats and babushkas with fresh down. They emanated a radiance of an exceptional mysterious tenderness that was brought from the faraway skies. Perhaps, this radiance was holy, but the person on the street was indifferent to it, he did not notice it, his mind was absorbed at that moment with something far more important and beyond ordinary, everyday events.

In the seeming tranquility of the evening, the ringing voices of the newspaper boys could be heard, as they burst running out of the printing house where a local paper was published. Worried city-dwellers chased after them, paid the money, and without waiting for change, hurried to an illuminated store window or a nearby street light, to make sure with their own eyes what they just heard from the streets and alleys, what the discordant chorus of newspaper boys was proclaiming—some unexpected and striking news. From everywhere were heard the ominous voices of naïve children:

"Revolution in Petrograd!"

"The Tzar has abdicated!"

"Abdication of the Monarch!"

"Nikolay the Second has abdicated in favor of Brother Michael!"

"Revolution in Russia!"

Troublesome voices, irritated, threatened the established way of life, overwhelming the inhabitants with awful feelings of uncertainty...

Some have believed in something promised by nobody, others were terror-stricken, a third group kept quiet in expectation of the unknown, the fourth conceitedly believed themselves to be the saviors of fatherland... Only the small part, the knights of honor, were marching firmly toward the goal, which was Russia.

Yes, the sovereign has abdicated.

In whose name?..

### March, 1917

The hot sunrays reflected from the splattering glossy mud of the streets of the remote suburb. Air was pure and clear. The snow still lay here and there, hidden in the low spots and small ditches. Vapor was rising from the beaten paths along the houses. Somewhere high, high the lark was singing, and here on the ground near the fences, people sat on the small benches enjoying Sunday rest and the early spring day.

I reached here through deep mud. It was still early, the divine service in the gymnasium church was just completed and I did not go home, or to the Cathedral Square where a demonstration was supposed to take place. Instead I came here to this remote suburb to get a good look into the faces of those who hold destiny of Russia in their hands. I knew, that on the parade which will be in the Cathedral Square on this day, the faces will reflect the parade spirit, but here, on the edge of the city, it will be an ordinary soldiers march and ordinary faces of men dressed in soldier uniforms.

Slowly, I was following a soft spring path, noticing that the street was becoming filled with more people, while the lark's song was becoming muffled by the people's voices. I was not the only one who had come to meet the soldiers, on whom, especially now, depended the survival or death of Russia.

I have approached the last small house behind which the steppe began, and in the distance I saw moving columns, straight rows of bayonets, shine of copper of military band. In advancing nearer ranks I saw power of the native land, its glory, its majesty and pride. For some reason, I thought that no other country has an army such as this. Perhaps I was not in error. After all, the whole Russian history tells about the unsurpassed bravery and magnanimity of the Russian army. Perhaps it was not in vain that the churches uplifted prayers about a Christ-favored army of men.

Regiments kept marching. The very front units were entering a small street of the suburb, filled with local people. Still, commanders were in their places. Still, accurate was the step. The command was still firm. But... the red bows on the soldiers' overcoats... Here and there they were seen also on bayonets of rifles...

Faces with concentrated, serious look, some gloomy faces, alternately, with indifferent stare, only occasionally faces with the foolish smile of unknown joy would appear... It was on the first warm spring day, on the day of the first revolutionary demonstration...

Involuntarily, I have remembered demonstrations in days of victories of the Russian army over the enemy. The same faces were sparkling with inspiration, determination, bravery, they showed hope and faith, in them was love for Russia... I stood with a desire to see the same now as well. In vain... The regiments that stood on rest from the front or waiting for formation were passing by with heavy thoughts about the future of fatherland...

When the front units of the column reached a city roadway, the sounds of the military band were heard. They played the "Marseillaise"... Strange. Perhaps, the French melody in some other time would not make such impression on me, as on that memorable day. Was it suitable for the Russian army to march under its sounds? Ah, yes! After all, now it is revolution! A sovereign has released everyone from the oath and now it is possible for Russian regiments to enter with this French song into a Russian city!

It was disgusting. I turned into an alley where there were no people, and quickly walked home. In my eyes flashed the Red bows, and from far away reached the copper sounds: *"Allons, enfants de la patri ..."*

Blasphemy in whose name? To replace a triumphal orthodox hymn with cheerfulness of the French revolution?

In whose name the red bows?..

In whose name the "Marseillaise"?..

### **Summer, 1917**

Women's battalions are going to the front. It turns out that Russia has few soldiers? Men have ceased to be defenders of the Native land? Is it a Matriarchy of the Twentieth century?

The Russian woman has a kind heart, deep in her heart is an infinite treasure of love, the precious modulations of it indulge, caress, and comfort. The Russian woman – mother and wife, girlfriend and sister – with her immeasurable beauty of love has gifted Russia with geniuses of reason and spirit, has given millions of inconspicuous heroes, true sons of Fatherland. But She herself is the genius and the hero, and in a time of hard times of native land, without reproach, without praise and glorifications of herself, she, the modest Russian woman, takes a rifle in her hands... She has responded with all depth of her soul, with all her heart full of love to a false call... Henceforth her physical strength, her life she has offered to Russia... Is it not a shame to remember these years of shame?..

The false call has raised female hordes, while men ran at this time from the front! But who could dream up the recent barrister who suddenly has become the head of the Russian State? The lawyer on a post of the Minister of War?! The person without any statesman thought?! The revolutionary reveling in own gab?! Words have enticed in a jungle of lies, the real became alien to understanding...

When one of the socialist-revolutionaries suggested to him to kill Lenin during the days of intense struggle, the leader-lawyer has refused! After all it is better to kill Russia!

In whose name? In the name of the French riding-breeches, English style service jacket or the lance-corporal haircut of the enamored in the pride of the leader?

Silent are his portraits in the show windows and kiosks, with his photo-cards rush the ninnies dizzied by the poison of wild freedom...

In whose name?.

### **October, 1918**

At the gymnasium, Alexander the First Blessed, reigned in apparent well-being. The portraits of sovereigns hanging in a recreational hall have been removed. On the faces of teachers could be seen confusion and bewilderment, vigilance and... fear. Even the teacher of gymnastics, a Czech, Franz Ivanovich, his head lowered but trying to shout as usual with his ringing voice the command words.

In the gymnasium church, as in all other churches, they were not praying about the Monarch's health, although at this particular time this prayer should have been uplifted by the whole Russian people who had lost, together with the crownbearing Monarch, also its Glory, Honor and Fatherland...

In the gymnasium happened to be only one Red – Bykhovski, a son of rich parents. He was not only preaching among the gymnasium students the socialism *a la Lenin*, but addressed the meetings, as if an experienced orator, in the town's garden theater. He was only eighteen years old. He was in the eighth grade. Friends forsook him. The teachers became obligingly courteous. It was rumored that his parents were enthusiastic about their son and predicted for him great revolutionary future.

In the middle of October, when the Bolsheviks captured the railroad station of Nikitovka, the Red commissars seized eleven White officers dressed in civilian clothing who had been trying to find a train going south, where the Whites held their positions on Don. They took them to the a woodsy grove along the railroad tracks. There the commissars forced the prisoners inside a rectangle formed by a stack of new railroad planks coated with tar and then barricaded them with some wooden snow fences that had been stored nearby. After that, they rolled two metal barrels out of the car and poured petroleum all over the planks and fences.

In a few moments the flames were shooting high and close to the ground the air was filled with the cloying smells of petroleum, burning tar, clothing, and flesh... Terrifying screams of horror of eleven unknown prisoners resounded from the burning revolutionary hell.

In whose name was done this medieval execution, paralyzing brain and emptying the soul?..

In whose name?..

### Years 1919-1920

The exams were over. The certificate was neatly placed into the drawer of a desk. Perhaps, it will come in handy someday...

"And now off to the army..."

"But what about University?" – mother asked in a troubled voice

"Mother, my dear, Russia comes first..."

Father kept silent...

The journey from Orel to Novorossiysk, journey to small Crimea is completed. Here, on a tiny peninsula, a large Russian heart is beating. The life became confused. The military get entangled with the ordinary citizens. People struck by the unexpected disaster began to go back to seemingly normal life. A popular singer, Vertinsky, was still addressing the beautiful ladies: "Your fingers smell of incense..."<sup>1</sup> Or he would inquire with a rhyme:

"I don't know what for  
And who needs it,  
Who did send them in the battle  
With unshaken hand..."

Although it is well known to both, ladies and the gray-haired generals, but no one dares to say that moustacheless boys heard the scream of Mother-Russia and went on their own to defend her Honor, Glory, and Might. Perhaps, Vertinsky couldn't understand that to wait when one would be sent to the battle – is a disgrace!

But the black hall applauds to the shining stage. The favorite of the public creates new songs, songs of that dramatic epoch, which Russia will never forget.

The last stage of fight ended in a battle of hopes and shot-down dreams. The

green waves of boundless sea are lapping in the southern fall. In the distance are the ships waiting in the roadstead. Their passengers would never come ashore in the quiet harbor of the native land. And here, on the shore, those who willingly or otherwise must appear in front of hell's judgment...

I was among them—in the battle of last days I was eighteen years old...  
Don't ask who sent them in the battle but ask:  
In whose name?..

### **Years 1920-1941**

Years of political inquisition.  
Years of coerced collectivization.  
Years of Stalin's dictatorship.  
In Whose Name?..

### **Years 1941-1945**

For many years hammered-in doors, rotten by never drying blood, didn't crash down but crumbled. The World appearing through distorting mirrors did open. One was ashamed of own wretchedness and ugliness. Therefore, it was terrifying to meet the world. In the shiny curvature of a surface one dreamed the liberation of soul and body. The cherished dream sometimes seemed to be finally a reality. Maddening war raised hopes for resurrection of Russia. The hope was not vain. Someone from the other world pushed the wasteyard and the Russian soul revolted in the oblivion: millions refused to serve to socialistic idol. They believed in the distorted apparition. They were caressed and pampered by the distorted outlines of opening before them world. And they escaped to the west...

Futile were the attempts of anti-deserters detachments of select executioners. Death was preferred to life. The snowy fields were covered by blackness from the fire coming from both sides. Above the common graves there were neither crosses nor monuments. Only occasionally on the run into ground stick some party bureaucrat wrote with simple paint: "Here was buried the senior lieutenant Lokhvitsky, heroically fallen in the battle for the city N.". But someone with an indelible pencil added terrible truth: "And some other eighty-five soldiers..." Their names only God knows.

The crooked mirror broke rather fast. German Nazi national-socialism was equivalent to Soviet communist international-socialism. It turned out that the nature of socialism cannot be changed. The man on the street was taken aback, got lost. The soldier grabbed his rifle. So, now, I have to defend Russia (not the USSR!). And there was no more need of anti-deserters detachments.

Gleb was not the only one who had heavy thoughts. The whole Russia was bearing it. And many, just like him, through the Nazi labor camps came to find their liberation.

The war is cruel. It has its own justification. The war of 1914 was the dignity of Russia. The rotation of the numbers gave birth to the second war: year 1941 – the dishonor of the USSR. Year 1917 destroyed Russia. Perhaps, in the year 1971 our children and our grandchildren would erect the three-colored banner in the city of Peter and multi-million voice would begin to sound with the joy of celebration of the Truth in a prayer-hymn?..

The war of 1941-1945...

A liberation from Revolution...Or perhaps its confirmation?..

In whose name?

### Year 1953

It is almost impossible to write the history of Russia in the Twentieth Century. Unattainable facts and numbers will disappear. There will be needed super-efforts of the most talented historians, archeologists, court investigators and psychiatrists, as well as assistance of the most simple, ordinary people so that the historical records of the Bloody Time of our Motherland would reflect the terrible truth...

Some believe and some do not believe in Russia. They think and wonder about her. They attempt to do something for her. But Russia. is alive. It is impossible to kill her spirit. She is in tears, in blood, she is suffering, she is being tortured and executed but no one has power to destroy it. And such powerlessness leads to embitterment, resentment, hatred, bloodshed and violence.

One cannot stop discontent of the spirit. The older generations pass away, but the discontent of spirit takes over the younger generation. The spirit is searching not only for the ways of reviving Russia, but also searches for her new form. Such process is painful complicated, and long but all this will take exact shape, the red idol will shatter from the anger of Russian spirit. When will this happen? In the year 1971?..

There are many "saviors" here, abroad, from Russia. But Russia will save itself. There are also many traitors from Russia here. In their twisted imagination, they dissect their Motherland, sell it off at the international flea market. There are many "liberators" who sold themselves to the foreign merchants, who are trying to dissect Russia "*a la Stalin*" into nations...

It's vanity of vanities. It is all good for nothing. Russia stands firm, indivisible, invincible. Russian people with all their might, with their spirit are a threat to the West not today. That's why the foreign merchants are feeding the mad fools from the camp at the Fourth International or the right of self-determination ones of the "peoples of Russia." Only the blind cannot observe closely the history of Russian State, therefore they imagine that they bring a revelation to the world... In the name of the new revolution? In the name of the new, absolutely pure socialism? In the name of the "peoples of Russia"?..

In whose name?

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The world should fear Communism in itself. Russia got to know it with millions of victims, with rivers of blood and tears, and she herself will shake off the red beast in year predetermined not by us... If we switch the numbers around, 1917 to 1971...

Maybe this would happen in Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-one...

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### Editor's note

The author's premonition was short by twenty years—it came true in Nineteen Hundred and Ninety-one!!!

## The Black Raven

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich was a Moscovite. In her gray-blue eyes and in her kind smile always shined the joy of life. She lived by a deep faith in God and in Mother Russia. She guided herself by faith in the family and in school, already teaching a second generation of children. Jokingly, she would tell her adult former students that she probably would teach their grandchildren and to develop their minds and thirst to learn. Her faith came from deep in her soul, heart, and mind without turning her life into an extreme of self-denial and austerity. Within the family and in the company of good friends one could hear very often the ringing peal of her laughter.

She loved the Russian olden times, and held firmly to their time-honored customs and traditions. She perceived extraordinary beauty in that time gone by and was able to present its richness in symphony of words in which one heard sincere love for mother country.

In a simple child's story, "Kolobok," which she often told to her small son Igor, even the adults would lose the reality. Her speech murmured as a happy stream and one didn't know where one was, in the world of Kolobok of childhood fantasy or in the reality of a comfortable living room chair. And in velvet tones, which flowed as the waves of the River Don, she would tell a Russian epic, *bylina* of "Ill'ya Muromets," Then from the dead past would rise the ancient Russian heroes with the strength and glory of Holy Russia. That could be followed by the story of "Boris Godunov," or by "Poltava"—the same Russia in the rhymes of poet genius Pushkin—that in her marvelous narration would transform the listener to a participant in the past-time deeds. It was not by chance only that Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna was the reader of the text accompanying the magic lantern shows for the pupils that were shown in those days before motion pictures. Then the stationary figures appearing on the screen would come to life and the "three maidens sitting under the windows" suddenly would begin to spin swiftly, their smiles to breathe with life, their eyes to sparkle with maidenly eagerness, and almost could be heard the dear-to-heart Russian voice saying, "If I was the Tsaritsa..."

She knew more than anyone all the ancient ceremonies and folklore of good and bad omens. Sometimes, just before the New Year, she would align a dozen of cups with the chopped onions and foretell, "June will be rainy, and July – dry; there will be good crop and harvest in good weather..." And it happened that way.

Life was simple, but overflowing with the riches of heritage from the past. It was a good life! And in her prayers she always raised and poured forth her gratitude to God for granting prosperity to her native land.

During difficult years of war for the honor of motherland and for the celebration of the orthodox faith, her face overshadowed with indelible wrinkles. Somewhere, far away on the front, Russian fighting men were dying. Was it possible to be indifferent during the years which weighed so heavily on the country? And in her fervent prayers she was not the only one who with eyes wet with tears appealed in prayers for granting victory to the soldiers of Russia...

But then came the year of 1917. Incomprehensible. Terrible. Ugly. It resurrected the year of 1905 from the darkness of Hell. Her wrinkles and gray hair tripled. There no more could be heard her rolling and ringing laughter. And there was not even a hint of her sweet smile.

Revolution! Revolution!

And in faraway Saint Petersburg, that by the will of the Tzar was renamed now as Petrograd, on the stage of history was being played a cynical and sinister farce. Suddenly, a defender of the criminals, who called himself Lenin, emerged as head of the Russian State; he was as a jester in a funeral procession shouting disgusting profane, demeaning drivel.

Thus did Russia stumbling into the abyss...

At times at the dinner table Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna would take a piece of bread, look at it sorrowfully and say, "Now even the bread is not the same—without the letter 'yat' and without the 'hard sign' letter.<sup>1</sup> 'Yať' was the inside of bread, its soft part, and the 'hard sign' letter at the end was the crust. One would eat it and know that it is bread in your mouth and not the worthless chaff of revolution."

More gray hair, deeper wrinkles on her face, her heart bleeding from the terrible premonitions...

One day one of the local super-revolutionaries asked her casually, "What is the matter, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna, why did you become quiet? Where is your laughter full of life? Where is your joy of life?"

"Russia is on the death bed; one needs to cry and pray God for salvation!"

"No, Russia is on the operating table."

"That's even worse. Father Krylov used to say in his fable, 'It is a misfortune when a shoemaker starts to bake the cakes and the pastry maker to repair the shoes...' You will kill Russia on your operating table!"

During the Christmas-tide, as usual, the small apartment resounded with the strident voices of youth. From the other towns would come home and gather together students from gymnasiums, royal, commercial and technical schools, and various specialized courses, the sons and daughters, nephews, and nieces, friends and girlfriends. A place was found for all, only the noise and the energy of youth not to be contained within the white walls of the rooms and so to burst forth into gloriously frosty days and star-covered nights.

The Christmas tree celebrations were over. The year of 1918 was nearing fast. And then, the thirty-first of December. It was the last day of the year 1917, the year that birthed the monstrous child that was destined to grow too evil to be christened.

Toward midnight the ring of youthful voices echoed in the rooms. They had opened wide the porch door and aroused the household:

"Mama!"

"Aunty!"

"Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna!"

"Let's do the fortune telling!"

"Let me to be the first today," said Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna. "What will happen to Russia?..."

On the upside-down dinner plate in the yellow flame burns the crumpled piece of paper. It emits the smoke, becomes black, and transforms into a fragile mass of



indefinite form. Dozens of eyes intensely seek to catch and identify the contours of its shadow from the candlelight. Suddenly the contrast is clear and contours on the wall appear as a burial mound atop of which is sitting the black raven...

Sorrow engulfed the hearts of all present and the fortune telling on the eve of 1918 went without usual laughter, without secret expectations and joy, without the nebulous desires of love and youthful dreams...

"Russia is going to perish," with this painful thought Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna left from this life to ask the Omnipotent in the next life to save her Mother Russia.

She left not without hope. She believed that the spirit of the Russian heroes would arise and that the courageous epic heroes would awaken and enter the fight with the Fiend of Hell to raise once more that great Russia with her immense richness of her past.

## Medieval Execution

After the revolution, the civil war started gradually as a movement to save Russia.<sup>1</sup> The clashes between the Reds and Whites polarized the population. In every family came the moment when a decision had to be made which side they were on—were they for the Soviets or for Russia? There was much confusion in the news about what was happening around the country. The railroad station of Nikitovka was a crossing point for the trains coming from north to south and from east to west and news from all over the country was received through passengers and railroad workers. The station was a valuable strategic point for both the Reds and the Whites, and changed hands several times.

I remember vividly what happened during one of the few days when the Reds occupied Nikitovka. It was in the middle of October, and the director of our gymnasium announced an unscheduled recess for students until the situation calmed down. On the second day of vacation I strolled pensively along the railroad tracks with sad, unclear thoughts. In my young mind I tried to understand why the Reds arrested and executed several well-known, respected citizens and railroad employees, some of whom my family and I knew very well. They were decent people who had never harmed anyone.

I came to a woodsy grove along the railroad tracks, a place I liked to go as a boy to play, and went deeper into the thicket and sat on a stump. Flocks of crows flew over the grove cawing loudly and distracted me for a while. Then there was silence, and everything around me felt strangely unreal. I observed as a yellow leaf fell slowly to the ground; after awhile the faint rustle of some small animal caught my attention and through the yellow and orange leaves above me the leaden autumn sky weighed heavily on my spirit and brought with it an ineffable feeling of sadness...

Suddenly I heard, far away, the clanking sound of metal that quickly increased in intensity. I rose from the stump and saw a shunting engine coming from the station. As it came closer I saw that it displayed the Red flag and pulled only one freight car. "A revolutionary train!" I thought, and sat back down on the stump. The locomotive was traveling fast, but as soon as it entered the grove, it slowed, then stopped so close to me that I could see the engine's smokestack.

I again stood and was about to leave my refuge to see what was happening when some instinct stopped me from moving. "The Reds!" I thought. "It's better that I keep quiet so I don't reveal my presence here." I sat down once more, but with cautious curiosity observed what was going on through the tree branches.

Several men in black leather jackets jumped out of the freight car onto the graveled railroad embankment. Then somebody pushed out of the car other men, dressed in common clothing with their hands tied behind their backs. "Prisoners", I guessed and counted, "One, two, three... six,... ten, eleven..."

The men in black leather jackets held revolvers in their hands and forced the prisoners inside a rectangle formed by a stack of new railroad planks coated with tar and then barricaded them in with some wooden snow fences that had been stored

nearby. After that, they rolled two metal barrels out of the car and poured petroleum all over the planks and fences. In a few moments I saw flames shooting high above the treetops.

Terrifying screams of horror resounded from the burning hell. Then the screams of the unknown prisoners being burned alive changed to faint but macabre and terrifying groans. Close to the ground the air was filled with the cloying smells of petroleum, burning tar, clothing, and flesh...

For a short time the men in black leather jackets observed the fire, but did not wait for the fire to subside. They climbed back into the car, and the engine pushed it back to the station.

I stayed in my hiding place for some time, stunned by what I had witnessed. Shuddering with horror, I felt numb, like I wasn't even alive. I tried to move my legs but they would not obey me. My mind refused to comprehend what had just happened...

Dazed and confused, I wandered along the railroad tracks for the rest of the day.

When I returned home that evening, feeling jaded and exhausted, my father was telling the news that earlier in the day eleven White officers dressed in civilian clothing had been trying to find a train going south, where the Whites held their positions. Suddenly they were seized by the Reds and taken away.

"They burned them all alive..." I whispered. Then a painful scream erupted from my young chest, "I saw it! I saw it happen in the grove!"

The whole family was shocked by my revelation. Hearing that his son had witnessed the execution appalled my father. He tightly embraced me as if he was trying to squeeze the terrifying experience out of me. He was able to ask only, "In whose name was this medieval execution done? In who's name?"

That time the Reds did not stay in Nikitovka long enough to make any further reprisals, but what they had done was enough to scare the population and demonstrate what would happen when they came back again.

## The Noble Hearts

I remember my youth, my friends and our noble hearts full of enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice we had to save Russia from the Red terror. It is so vivid in my mind that I could see clearly, as if it was only yesterday—a small group of gymnasium students in a big classroom, some sitting on the benches, the others on the teacher's desk and on the windowsills. Notwithstanding the critical situation and the acuteness of a question that was troubling all of us, our deliberation had a character of a peaceful discussion rather than of a formal meeting. That's how a blond, blue-eyed Andrey Kozhan was always able to organize and keep any of our gatherings go smoothly.

Andrey, who was by birth from a simple peasants-workers family, conceived hatred for the Bolshevism from the first days of Revolution. Any time when the question about the fight of Whites and Reds was coming up in a discussion, Andrey quietly dissuaded the most ardent defendants of the Reds. Even the teacher of Russian language, Stanislav Semyenovitch, who decided to conduct Red propaganda among the gymnasium students, was once so snubbed off by his student that he never got into a political arguments in his presence.

That day a discussion was called forth by the new atrocity committed yesterday by the "Red-skinned," as we, the students, called Bolsheviks. By pure chance I witnessed the execution of eleven White officers by the Reds who temporarily were occupying our railroad station of Nikitovka. Andrey asked me to tell my friends about the horror, the terrible ordeal and suffering that these men had to endure before their death.<sup>1</sup>

I told my friends that on that warm autumn Sunday morning I went out after breakfast for a walk. It was nice to be alone and contemplate, to collect my thoughts. As I was walking toward the Magdalinovsky grove, on my mind were recent tragic events that happened since the Reds occupied Nikitovka—the arrests and executions of people that our parents and all of us knew and respected.

I was reflecting on how good it would be if the world could be in such order that the people wouldn't have any sorrows and that the natural end of life would be without pain. But those were only dreams because I knew that it was impossible to have such world. I entered the grove with my dreams and wondered for some time in the woods, then sat on the stump to rest. Everything was peaceful and quiet.

Then suddenly my peaceful contemplation was interrupted by the clanking of arriving locomotive displaying the red flag and with only one freight car. I quickly realized that it was commanded by the Reds. Several men dressed in commissars' uniforms jumped out of the car and two others were pushing out the men who had their hands tied in the back. The men were falling down on the embankment hurting themselves, but not even one of them emitted a sound. I counted eleven prisoners.

Commissars had plenty of weapons: rifles, revolvers, machinegun, cartridge belts, and grenades—everything necessary to exterminate life. Shouting and profanity of a kind that I as a lad never heard before were coming out from the hurrying commissars. It is known that dirty deeds are done in a hurry and so it was happening here.

I told my friends what was happening minute by minute during this horrible execution. How the commissars carefully rolled out two big barrels with petroleum. How the prisoners were assembled in a group, encircled with the snow fence, poured over with petroleum and set on fire.

I concluded the story by saying, "The prisoners burned taking with them great secret of courage, but even under the threat of fire they didn't answer one word to the questioning commissars. Only the terrifying screams of horror resounded from the burning hell."

Like everybody at the station my friends heard about the White officers who were arrested at the station while they were trying to board the train going south probably trying to reach their units fighting on the River Don. But they didn't know all the details that I told them. When I finished, the students remained sitting quietly stricken by the horror of the brutal execution. Heavy burden fell on their hearts. Their eyes were cast down. Silence reigned in the room. Someone emitted a deep sigh.

"Here, my friends," finally, concluded Andrey Kozhan, "one more atrocious incident committed by the Reds. What we are going to do? Be quiet and wait for more atrocities or are we going to join the White Army units fighting on the Don?"

My good friend Vadim Kuzenko took out a cigarette and lighted it; then he got up, walked across the room and stopped near Andrey.

"Let's not make a decision the Bolshevik's way," – he suggested, – "let's not vote. Let our conscience tell each of us what to do. If anyone wants to know, I am going to join the White Army on the Don. Tomorrow at ten o'clock there is a train going to Taganrog and from there I can reach the Whites by foot. It is even better to do it alone. "Red-skinned" probably wouldn't catch or detain you."

"You are right, Vadim," I replied, "They also wouldn't touch the two of us—we are only boys! Who can pick on us? We always can say that we are traveling home, or to relatives. I will be there with you at ten. Maybe we can travel in different cars, if you are afraid."

"What you think about me? Going into the Army and be afraid to travel together?" Vadim replied.

Boris Minayev was sitting silently sunk in thoughts. He looked as if he didn't even hear the words of his friends. Andrey knew the reason for his silence and wanting to change his friend's state of mind, asked him.

"What? Is it difficult to solve this problem? Boris, believe me, nobody is trying to force you to go against your will. We know that you are with us in spirit. There is no obligation for you to be in the White Army. We all know how your departure to Don would affect your ailing parents. We all also know how your girlfriend Lidia Talimova would suffer. We look upon you as our dear friend, but no one is forcing you to go into the Army."

"Do not make a decision the Bolshevik's way," Vadim repeated his preferred phrase. "I decided, tomorrow at ten I am departing. I just want to know who also is going to join the White Army, but I don't want to make out of this a vote."

"Idea!" I shouted. "Boris will remain here as a messenger! We will notify him when we shall depart to join the Army, mail him our addresses and keep contact through him."

"Gentlemen," Boris replied calmly, "I am joining the White Army. I am only thinking how I could prepare my mother and father. About Lidia I don't want even to think. Her

young life should also be dedicated to fight for Russia. Maybe we together hand in hand will be fighting for the salvation of the Russian people."

Suddenly Mikhail Volkov vocalized the idea that probably was on everyone's mind, "Gentlemen, and if among us is a stool-pigeon? What you think will come out of all our idea if it will be known to the Reds? Don't you think that I'm afraid. I am telling you ahead of time that I am joining the White Army. My idea had ripened already when the Reds have shot my father only because he was a Station Master. And today for me was only a last push to carry out this decision."

Everyone looked at each other strictly in the eyes. The new question scared everybody. Some even shivered nervously. No one wanted to give his life senselessly. All thought, as did I, "To die for the liberation of Russian people in fighting against the Reds, is all right. I am willing to die for a cause. But to be killed as a homeless dog because he is being betrayed? No!"

"If you think about me," Yasha Malobrodsky said suddenly, "I am also joining the White Army!"

"You, a Jew, are joining the Whites?" Vadim asked. "Don't you know that some *byelogvadyeytsy*<sup>2</sup> say: 'Kill the Jews, and save Russia!'"

"I know that, but I am against the Bolsheviks."

"Think about it until it is not too late. You will find it difficult as a Jew to be in the White Army. With the Bolsheviks you will be treated well," Vadim suggested.

"Oh, no, Vadim. I want to be with my friends."

"Ah! You want to do it only for this reason? No, Mister Malobrodsky, there is no way for you to go with us," replied Vadim. "But it will be a shame if you resulted to be a stool-pigeon. But we are ready for it..."

The discussion took the unpleasant turn. Everybody knew that Vadim was inveterate anti-Semitist. And all also knew that Malobrodsky always tried to show that Jews are not like it was common for many people to think about them.

These discussions jarred on the nerves of the students, and Andrey Kozhan decided to stop this and called loudly, "Gentlemen, each of us has to prepare our parents, our departure should not be considered as running away. Therefore, I think we need now to go home to have enough time to discuss it. Besides, it's lunch time; Good bye, friends, I am leaving."

Everybody hurried toward the door and walked home either alone or with some friend. Everyone was sad. Probably everyone was thinking, as was I, "Farewell gymnasium classrooms, farewell dear place of youthful games and candid joyful gaiety, of first flashes of love; farewell the nest so carefully built by our parents, and maybe good bye life..."

I came on time for lunch. At the table mother and father were discussing the execution of the eleven officers burned by the Reds recalling all the details that I told them yesterday. Although the execution was done in secrecy, everyone in Nikitovka knew about it and it arouse great indignation.

I kept quiet. Only after the meal, when Father began to smoke, I told him, "Papa, I have to talk to you."

Father was surprised and worried. "Let's go in my office," how he called his special space in the living room. "We can talk there better." We silently walked across the large room. Father sat on the sofa, which was unusual, and I sat on the armchair.

"Well, my dear Papa, I decided to join the White Army. In fact, today a small group of students met in the Gymnasium and most of my friends decided to join the White Army. It is impossible to live like this. Bolsheviks must be annihilated.

Yesterday, as you know, I witnessed the killing of eleven officers, the day before we witnessed the killing of engineer Goryainov and his family and plundering of his home. A few days ago Mikhail Volkov's father was killed only because he was a Station Master. What can we expect tomorrow? Everything is falling, all moral principles on which our society existed for centuries, all laws, culture, even monuments, all is being destroyed... I don't know what is waiting for our family, for you, for Mother, sisters and my little brother, what is waiting for me. But I don't want to wait for it silently."

"*Rostik*, but you are not seventeen yet—too soon to die."

"Even the babies are dying, Papa. I am capable of holding a gun in my hands and to defend not only my life but also the life of our family and of Russian people."

Father got up, walked silently across the room. "Have you thought thoroughly about your decision? Aren't you attracted by the shining shoulder straps of the uniform? Remember, the war is not a gymnasium's parade!"

"Papa, I'm sorry for giving you hard time, but you and Mama should understand that youth must become actively involved in this fight today because tomorrow it could be too late."

"Are you imagining clearly what the war is? Can I, the Father, give you consent for your death?"

"And if tomorrow some commissar would kill me as a homeless dog? Maybe with the price of thousands like me, will be bought happiness of all our people, including our family."

"Logically you are right. But you should understand, Orest, that for me, as a Father, is not easy now to tell you 'Yes'"

"Papa, you can easily do this. Just turn away from me for a moment and look far away."

We remained in silence for a moment, then my father said, "I think, maybe you are right... and I am saying 'Yes.' But with Mama I will talk myself. I am happy that I brought up a son like you. I am happy that you decided to join the White Army, but at the same time it is very difficult for me to part with you and to think, God forbid... your death would bring us eternal grief. Orest, you should understand that it is very difficult for me."

"Oh, Papa, I promise to live until all Bolsheviks are annihilated."

"I will pray God to protect you, my dear." Father embraced me and added, "Remember only that the war is not a holiday."

And I left allowing him to convince my mother. I had a lot to do. The most important was to see maybe for the last time the one about whom I was thinking day and night, whose image was clear and pure, the one who made my heart beat faster... She was my first love, pure and chaste. She was my life of youth, intelligent and beautiful. Her name was Lyubov, which means "love" and it combined her name with my feelings toward this wonderful girl.

I often called her "love to the second power." And when Lyuba, as I called her for short, was telling me that this was not enough, I was increasing it to love in the third power, fourth power and so on until the power was becoming of infinite degree and I was given permission for a kiss. Our happiness was already assured. Our lives were

already intertwined with pure bright feelings and the future appeared to be shining with beauty and certainty, not being settled down on a vulgar coziness.

But now the hour arrived when life became distorted through the prism of Russian revolution and could, hopefully for short time, sharply change its course, or at least change further peaceful perspectives, or maybe completely destroy them. I never talked with Lyuba about revolution, about Whites or Reds, or about becoming a soldier to defend one side or the other. But I was always thinking that my years were coming closer to the moment when life would require from me a direct first-hand participation in a fight. And I definitely would fight now against the Reds.

But why explain this to Lyuba? I don't expect any conflict with her on this matter. It is impossible that she, a daughter of an engineer, a student in a gymnasium, would be defendant of Bolsheviks. I associated her with all clean, bright, and beautiful, and the Bolsheviks, with all dirty, bloody, and ugly.

To reach the coal mine where Lyuba lived I was able to catch the cargo train. Then I walked briskly on the railroad tracks, passed the mine and reached the miners' hamlet. The path of the alley leading to the house of engineer Tcherednichenko was covered with leaves. "Nobody is taking care of the alley, I thought. So many fallen leaves and nobody to remove them. Revolution..."

Yes, on the coal mine Communism was on the loose. One could notice it by the disorder, and by the arrogant tone of women's utterings:

"It's enough to oppress the working class!"

"You know, dear brothers, there's freedom!"

"Even if there is no food now, we are not going to work and will not allow our husbands go into the mines!"

"The coal is not needed by the revolution! Those who need it should themselves go into the mine. But us, we have worked enough!"

Passing through the mine only confirmed the consequences of this distorted perception of a concept of "freedom" by the "working class" not willing to work any more—the mine was not working for some time.

I came to Lyuba's house; it looked empty. No one answered to the bell at the front door. I decided to try the back door and walked through the courtyard. I was impressed by the quietness in the yard and got on the alert. "Something happened in this house," I thought. "Really, the stable is open and there are no horses. The Reds probably took them away."

I came to the back door. Here also I had to knock long time waiting for the sound inside. And when I was ready to leave, I heard light steps behind the door and then a clank of an iron hook that was used to lock the door.

"Ah, that's you, Orest?" Lyuba asked with an artificially sounding surprise. It was obvious that she studied well who was behind the door and then without asking opened the door. These days it was not common to do this.

"Lyuba, forgive me, maybe I came at the wrong time, but I am joining the White Army and came to say good bye."

"They killed my father last night," she replied almost in a trance. "I cannot be with you here too long, I cannot leave Mama alone... she is not feeling well..."

"I will not come inside," I reassured her. "Why have they killed your father? Poor Lyuba, it must be very painful for you..."



"Good-bye, Orest, I cannot talk now..." she interrupted and closed the door.

I looked inquisitively at the house in which Lyuba disappeared. Our "Good bye" came out somewhat incongruous, unfinished, unconvincing. I felt inside an unpleasant aftertaste, I felt uncomfortable, awkward, like not my usual self.

Without turning to look back, I walked on the alley, trying hard to imagine what happened to Lyuba. Why the last encounter came out in such strange and unpleasant form. And I came to the conclusion that all this was connected with the tragic death of her father. She was not herself today.

"But who killed her father? Definitely, Bolsheviks. A revenge—one more innocent victim," was the answer in my mind. I decided that I would write her and in a letter explain all that had accumulated in my soul during these last days. And I walked the long way home.

Mother encountered with a question, "Well, Rostik, what you intend to do?"

"To fight, *Mamusya*."<sup>3</sup>

"It's scary, you could be killed."

"Yes, Mama, everything could happen. Even here in this apartment there is no guarantee that we could remain alive. You know that last night they killed engineer Tcherednichenko?"

"Who, Nikolay Ivanovich?"

"Yes, yes... That's Mama without a war."

"Why? What was the reason?"

"Don't you know? That's the way of Bolsheviks!"

"Rostik, you think they could come to us, too?"

"I don't know, Mama, everything could happen. That's why I am going to fight, to make everything better in this land, to make Russia to be Russia again, and not a Bolshevik's preposterous state as it is becoming now. It is imperative to annihilate Bolsheviks, Mama. But to be killed—they can kill you here, too..."

## Volunteers

Sevastopol, April 1920. The Fifth Battery of Drozdovsky Artillery Brigade. A long train of freight cars stands on the station. English artillery pieces and horses are already loaded. The artillerymen are sitting in the cars. On the station platform officers are moving businesslike and solemnly discuss something. The Commander of the Fifth Battery, at that time still Captain Mussyn-Pushkyn, tall, erect and dark-complexioned, is giving the last minute orders to the officers. The Fifth Battery Artillery Brigade is ready to depart for the front...

In front of Captain Mussyn-Pushkyn stood two boys. One—dark-haired, skinny, with inquisitive brown eyes, and the other—red-haired, ruddy-faced, broad-shouldered, with the greenish eyes. Both dressed in English uniforms. With serious expressions on their faces, they proudly stood at attention in front of the Commander—right hands touching the bills of military caps.

“Sir Captain!” reported the boy with the greenish eyes. “Volunteers Vadim Kuzenko and Orest Gladky are at your disposal!”

The Captain had already received information that they were joining his unit, therefore, he was not surprised and without questions, told them, “Very well, gentlemen, you are traveling in the car number eighteen... We are departing shortly.”

“Yes! Sir Captain!” both volunteers answered in unison, and after making a turnabout, went in search of car eighteen.

Boys quickly found their car and climbed in with their field bags, found a spot where there was room and accommodated next to each other.

The sun quickly disappeared over the horizon and the car swayed on in semi-darkness. The soldiers began to accommodate themselves for the night and propped their heads on military bags. Their quiet, calm conversations included no references to the forthcoming travel. Instead, they talked about how uncomfortable were the freight cars, remembered native places and loved ones. Nobody talked about the war—as if it didn’t exist.

One of the boys was called Vadik and the other Rostik. Both tried very hard to make their voices sound more mature, smoked and spat bitter nicotine saliva through their teeth and in everything imitated the adult soldiers. For a while, they silently observed the unknown men but before long, the monotonous rumble of the train going north lulled them into a healthy, youthful sleep.

The morning greeted with sun and warmth. A very small station accepted train on its reserve tracks. The Fifth Battery started to unload. The horses were led out, field guns and various vehicles—field carts, machinegun carts, and simple peasant wagons—were rolled off platform cars. All battery implements, soldiers and officers field bags were loaded onto these vehicles. Machine guns were mounted on their carts. Draft horses were harnessed and attached to the carts and waited impatiently to get on the road.

The battery Commander sent a message. Vadim was assigned to the First

cannon, Rostik was assigned to the Fourth cannon. Both knew the English cannons well from training at artillery school, where they had been the whole winter of 1920 on the northern part of Sevastopol.

Finally, the formation was ready. The orders were given.

"Mount the horses!.. Forward, ma-a-a-rch!" and the Battery began to move westward out of the small rail station.

At the head of the column was the Commander of the Battery on a black horse. Behind him were the cannons, and next – the machinegun carts with their crew and commanders, and at the rear of the column was the field kitchen with wagons carrying provisions and supplies.

The veteran artillerymen observed the volunteers, the young boys-artillerymen. They got acquainted. The older artillerymen thought that boys had flown away from their parents' nests. They were wrong. Both had permission from their fathers. They came to defend their motherland acting on their precept, "Don't surrender to Bolsheviks!"

When the Fifth Artillery Division reached the small Tartar village of Kurman-Kemelchy, the order to stop was received. The soldiers were told to find a place to stay overnight in the village and the officers in the nearby manor.

In the morning, the artillerymen began intensive training on the English cannons that were new to the veterans, who needed to learn how to use them. But for two young volunteers just out of Artillery School who knew the cannons well, life away from the battlefield seemed pretty dull. They waited impatiently to depart to the front line where the real action was. They grew very excited when training was over and the order came to move in the direction of northwest.

The last stop was in a town called Armyansky Bazar for final inspection. There the Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Armed Forces, General Baron Pyotr N. Wrangel, inspected the troops, which were destined to breach a gap at the Perekop, cross over the historic isthmus, get out to the spacious steppes of Tavriya. The boys fixed their eyes on the Commander-in-Chief. Their young faces lit up with joy and pride...

The commander of the Battery offered twice to send the boys to the Officers' School in Sevastopol but they twice firmly replied, "Sir Captain, there are already too many officers and not enough soldiers! In these words was not hiding an overflowing desire to reach the front line and to finally take part in the fight against Bolsheviks.

We, who are far away in all respects from the boys like Vadik and Rostik, observed the young volunteers during the whole Crimea campaign. We watched the young soldiers-volunteers, who not even once showed themselves as children. Steadfastness, discipline, military bearing, and maybe the most important—the spirit! What a wonderful young and healthful spirit! Burning to serve Motherland!

What forced these boys to leave their fathers' homes, gymnasiums, and youthful play and passions? What forced them to exchange their parents' comfort for the uncomfortable camp life? What guided them in their decision to enroll in the Volunteer White Army? It was not possible that they did not understand the perils of the war! It was not possible that they risked their young lives just to brag in front of their gymnasium friends! It was not possible that their parents gave them calmly a permission to get into the ranks of the Army! What was it then? It is known—war is not a parade where one can show off with military bearing and measured tread! It is

known—war is not gymnasium's ball where one can turn the heads of gymnasium girls by ability to dance!

"I hate Bolsheviks!" tells one of the boys.

The other doesn't say anything but his eyes shine with the same hatred, about which said the first one.

Then what is that strong feeling, which brought those two boys to the front? But only those two? Thousands of children-volunteers! How many of them perished on the battlefields? How many left the country? How many remained prisoners? How many managed to escape from those prisoner camps?

Than what is it, this strong and wonderful feeling compelling children to take arms in their own hands to fight with the red scum? What was it?

Love! Love of Fatherland! Love for native land! Love for Russia!

In the name of this love children were giving everything most precious—their young lives. They were giving their childhood. They sacrificed the beauty of their young lives, sacrificed schools, their parents' care and love, comfort and mothers' endearment, because they felt with their pure hearts that they were losing the endearment of their Mother-country...

There was no fear of bullets, no fear of shells, not even fear of those primitive bombs that were thrown from the "Illia Muromyets"! Ahead—clear young idea, idea of Russia! Toward her were rushing thousands of children-volunteers. Volunteers from all heroic White Armies in the South, North, East and West of Russia—from the Armies of Alekseyev, Narkov, Kornilov, Drozdovsky, Wrangel, Kolchak, Yudenich, and Cossaks from Kuban and Don!

Volunteers of the Civil War full of love toward the native country were fighting "For Fatherland!" "For Faith!!" "For Russia!"

## After The Battle

Like a huge, fiery, orange ball, the sun rolled down the western sky. The Fifth Battery of the Artillery Brigade<sup>1</sup> left its position at the front line and formed a long, narrow column that moved slowly toward a German colony<sup>2</sup> that appeared just beyond a small hill. The colony's splendid green gardens and red-tiled roofs greeted the tired artillerymen, promising deserved rest.

The hot day of almost non-stop artillery firing came to an end. A cool evening and peace and quiet were approaching. Friendly, refreshing currents of rapidly cooling air could be felt. Everyone needed to rest, quench their thirst, wash the sweat and dust off after a daylong battle, appease their hunger and finally fall asleep. No, perhaps they wanted most of all to drop into a deep sound sleep to make up for the sleepless hours endured during the disturbed, tense nights at the front. Just to lie down, it didn't even matter where, as long as they could sprawl out their limbs, close their eyes and lose consciousness until the morning. To be sure, they would wake up very early and again hear the command. "Ma-a-a-rch!" And then on the front line hear, "Scattered fire!" And again, "Fire!... Fire!... And, hopefully, to hear, "Forward!" But that was just the wishful dream of a young volunteer.

In reality, the Fifth Artillery Battery Division made no headway for a long time and marched up and down in northern Tavriya among the same cleanly kept German colonies and mowed fields, among the melon fields with succulent watermelons and sweet-scented melons... The men's thoughts flew forward, and forward! And even though they felt strong in spirit, little could be done with fewer and fewer men remaining to fight...

The Fifth Battery of the Artillery Brigade moved to the unpaved road. The horses' feet flung up dust that wrapped the column in a thick gray cloud that trailed behind it along the road in a long smoky tail. The Fourth cannon inhaled most of the dust stirred up by the whole Battery ahead of it. The artillery crew was instantly covered in a velvety-gray coating; only the artillery Commander, Lieutenant Toglyev-Kushchiyev riding his horse in the field against the wind, remained untouched by the dusty cloud.

Once more the sun smiled on the column then disappeared over the edge of the horizon. The Fifth Battery of the Artillery Brigade entered the German colony and stopped before it reached the outlying cottages. It was a small colony consisting of one large street, like most German colonies in that region, with fifteen to twenty homesteads located on each side of it.

The drivers immediately took care of the horses, without removing the gun gears. After a busy day, the rest of the crew's first duty was to clean the guns. Together with two other crewmembers, we laid a tarpaulin canvas on the ground and began cleaning the gunlock, while the rest of the crew cleaned the gun's barrels.

The Reds were only a few kilometers away in a neighboring colony. On the wind the fragments of their songs could occasionally be heard:

"With courage we will go into battle

For the power of the Soviets.

And all of us will die for its cause..."

To the White soldiers it seemed that along with that song they could almost hear the hollow steps of the Red infantry, which was by 1920 already well organized, trained and harshly disciplined compared to the beginning of the revolution when the questions about the attacking or retreating was decided by voting on the front line. Although the crew was already used to the closeness of the Reds, they also knew that they had to be on the alert at all times, and so they hurried to clean their guns.

Dusk was quickly approaching and the southern night began embracing the surroundings. The crew was eager to rest, to sleep and relax their tired bodies.

Suddenly, at the opposite end of the colony, where Drozdov's Seventh Howitzer Battery Brigade was positioned, was heard an explosion and the bright flash illuminated the sky. Everyone in the Fifth Battery of the Artillery Brigade was alarmed. A patrol was dispatched to find out what happened to our fellow soldiers in the Third Division of the Drozdov's Artillery Brigade. The patrol returned with the news that an artilleryman on one of the crews had forgotten to unload a Howitzer at the firing line and accidentally fired it right at the edge of the colony.

The soldiers from the patrol brought back several empty metal boxes from the Howitzer shells as souvenirs of the accident. One of the boxes ended up in my hands, and it traveled with me long after the civil war was over. I kept my tobacco and smoking paraphernalia in it. Every time I took this box in my hands, I remembered the incident at the Seventh Howitzer Battery.

The field kitchen did not arrive in time, but the artillerymen were so tired that they didn't even feel hungry. After cleaning the guns, they sprawled out near them on the dusty road and enjoyed the coolness of the night. However, the incident in the Seventh Howitzer Battery had disrupted their intentions of quickly falling asleep. Instead of the sound sleep, they engaged in quiet conversation. I remember that somebody spoke of something peaceful, about his happy past and life at home, about the past. Everyone listened to the young man's simple story, a story common to most of these beardless boys still in their teens, who had so recently exchanged gymnasiums uniforms for English field jackets. They had lived similar lives and had similar interests in the past, and fought in the present hoping to have a similar future. The only things that distinguished them were their names, the color of their eyes and hair, and the shapes of their bodies.

Complete darkness surrounded the young artillerymen. The young storyteller, who sat beside me, stopped in the middle of a sentence without finishing the most interesting part of his story, and his head lolled down onto my leg. Pure silence followed, no one said another word. I realized that a healthy, youthful sleep had overtaken my companions and that I was the only one who had remained awake, waiting to hear the end of the story. For a while I stared into the darkness without moving, because I didn't want to disturb the young storyteller's quiet sleep. I finally noticed that I hadn't washed my hands or brushed the dust out of my clothes, and I hadn't had the chance to quench my thirst.

I rested upon the wheel of my cannon, staring into darkness and let my thoughts wander. Good God! What thoughts may float in the head of a not-yet-eighteen-year-old volunteer of the White Army who tried to speak as an adult, spit through his teeth like a

veteran soldier and click awkwardly to attention at any occasion! My thoughts ran ahead in time. I imagined myself to be already a Captain, or maybe a Colonel, or—why not?—even a Major-General... I was in charge of an artillery division, or maybe a brigade, or—why not?—the whole front was under my command... My army took villages and towns one after the other and I marched triumphantly with my troops through my small hamlet... Or—why not?—my army assaulted the cities of Moscow and Petrograd... And I envisioned the entire Motherland being liberated from the hordes of Reds... My Motherland, to whom I gave the best years of my life...

The twinkling dots of stars sprinkled on the dark sky were like precious stones tossed on a sea of black velvet. My eyes became accustomed to the darkness and I could recognize the contours of gardens and rooftops. And closer to me I could discern the motionless bodies of my battle friends sprawled out on the dusty road. In the silence of the night I could hear their breathing or their snoring and the occasional snorting of the horses. Overhead, a bat silently darted over like a fleeting shadow under the cover of night... The earth rested in darkness; only the crickets in the fields engaged in sibilant chorus and the light wind caused a barely perceptible rustle of leaves in the colony gardens...

I fell in a deep sleep...

Before a daybreak arrived to the rested earth, a single gunshot was heard. I woke up and saw the horseman who had come to check on the horses. He patted them gently, soothed them with a few kind words, and remained standing next to them. Somebody sobbed in his sleep. Trying not to disturb my companions, I carefully got up, took my tobacco box from my field bag and walked over to the horseman. In silence we rolled our-own, and hiding the light of our matches in the hollow of our hands began to smoke. It was dawning...

*For the 32-nd anniversary of the Red assault at the station of Salkovo*

## Nata

It was the seventeenth or eighteenth of October, by the old calendar, of the catastrophic year 1920, when the fight of the Whites to save Holy Russia was coming close to a dismal outcome. Thousands of exhausted Russian men wearing Russian and English uniforms swarmed over the wide, autumn-gloomy steppes of the southern Ukraine, right at the doors of Crimea. They were powerless to stem the tide of raging, advancing Red cavalry that outnumbered them many times over. The cavalry of Bolshevik General Budenny and the Red infantry of Siberians drafted by Bolsheviks and sent there to “liberate” Crimea from the last stronghold of the Whites were too great an enemy. Disarranged and disconnected White military units tried to avoid, or desperately fought to break free of the Red’s encirclement. All units anxiously sought to find a way to Perikop and the Sivashy,<sup>1</sup> or to the Chongarsky Railroad Bridge. They hoped these obstacles would serve as natural fortifications that would help them to hold back the advancing wild Red hordes. In those troubled days I turned eighteen.

In one of the Red artillery<sup>2</sup> shellings, a few days before my birthday, I suffered a contusion in my left leg, my left eardrum was ruptured from the air pressure of the explosion, and I lost my hearing. I was transferred to a transport unit that was rapidly retreating south toward the sea.

The horses were rushing at full speed on the dusty autumn road toward the Sivashy. To the right were the railroad tracks; to the left, the immense flatness of harvested fields. In the watchful tension, one could hear the muffled thud of horses’ hooves on the soft, dusty road, and occasional peremptory shouting of the drivers. Officers and soldiers intently scrutinized the far away murkiness. Their thoughts were focused on finding a way to escape, from being surrounded by the Reds.

Unexpectedly, far off to the right on the other side of the railroad tracks, appeared the barely defined figures of Red cavalry riders. The transport drivers urged the horses into a gallop.

From the station of Salkovo, situated not far from the town of Militopol,<sup>3</sup> appeared the strings of carts and carriages of every kind, and their horses galloped at full speed through the field, racing each other. The drivers urged the horses on with wild screams, and to increase their speed they threw part of their loads to the ground littering it with all kinds of things. When they reached our transport unit they rode alongside our wagons, inserted themselves between them; then they finally passed and left us behind. On foot, soldiers, civilians, and nurses in blue uniforms ran between and behind the carts, wagons, and carriages, some of them trying to hold on to the wagons to speed up their pace.

Several of our transport wagons, including the one I was riding on, were run off the road, and our horses continued racing through the field. Suddenly we got onto a steep embankment. For a moment it seemed that we were safe. Then, to our right side, appeared a chain of soldiers who seemed to be waiting for the enemy. The officers wore White Army uniforms, but most of the soldiers wore Red Army uniforms. An idea



flashed in my mind, "It must be General Drozdovsky's Third Infantry Regiment, the one he hurriedly organized almost entirely of captive Red soldiers". But after our transport wagons passed them the soldiers stuck their bayonets in the ground and raised their hands. In no time a unit of General Budenny's Red Cavalry surrounded them and they surrendered without a fight.

Our group of transport wagons, including mine, came up the embankment. To our left was a place called Gnyloye Boloto,<sup>4</sup> where we could see that the detachments of Red Cavalry had already arrived and were fanning out to encircle us.

Suddenly a scream resounded, "We are surrounded!" All hope of escape disappeared in seconds. Drivers and soldiers jumped down from the wagons and began to run in every direction, trying to lose themselves in the chaos of running people and frightened horses pulling unattended wagons.

The irregular and sporadic gunfire, the cries of wounded men, and the savage shouts of the Red horsemen impelled me to run for cover toward one wagon that stood still. Almost unconsciously, it dawned on me that the shoulder straps on my English field jacket were too bright. I searched the wagon for something to cover them with and found a Russian soldier's overcoat that I hurriedly donned, while quickly scanning the chaotic field.

The Red horsemen were galloping everywhere and there was no way out. A *budennovyets*<sup>5</sup> on a skewbald horse was galloping straight toward me. He swung his sword high above his head, its blade shining red reflecting rays of the disappearing sun. Instinctively, I jumped under the wagon, hoping that the horses would stay put.

The *budyennovyets* closed in on my wagon. His slashing sword pierced the side of the wagon and a piece of torn board fell to the ground. As I crouched under the wagon I thought, "I am still alive! Perhaps the Red has spent his Bolshevik fury on the wagon. Perhaps he will let me live..."

The *budyennovyets* cursed obscenely, then rudely shouted the order, "Come out you White scum!" Slowly, I came out from hiding.

"Wha-a-t are you, an *akhvitser*?"<sup>6</sup> asked the *budyennovyets* mispronouncing the words.

"Wha-a-t?" I asked him, mocking his pronunciation.

"*Akhvitser*?" repeated the *budyennovyets* impatiently.

"Who-o?.. Me-e-e?.." I asked him slowly, as if I were surprised to hear such a question.

The *budyennovyets* cursed again, hooked his sword blade under the shoulder straps on the soldier's coat I wore, and cut them off. "Climb up on the wagon! Turn it around, and drive that way!" he ordered, pointing his sword to the north.

I climbed on the wagon and slowly began to redirect the horses. The *budyennovyets* galloped off in search of another victim. I slowed down the horses.

From the wagon I saw a long freight train on the railroad tracks. One of the middle cars had a black Orthodox cross on it. "The church wagon", I thought. "It must be one of our trains; the Reds don't have crosses on their cars". A small locomotive engine with steam rising from its stack was at the south end of the train. Suddenly the shunting engine with only one car attached to it, separated itself from the rest of the train and moved south, quickly increasing its speed. From the open door of the attached freight car the rattle of a machine gun resounded. The *budyennovtsy*,<sup>7</sup> alarmed by the sudden

machine gun fire, left the wagons with the horses and prisoners, and rushed in the direction of the runaway train.

In the confusion that followed, I took the opportunity to stop the horses, turn my wagon south, and ride as fast as the horses could carry me down the hill toward the sea. Abruptly the horses came to a stop at the edge of a steep precipice. I flew out of the wagon over the horses' bodies and rolled down the sheer sandy slope all the way to the shore of the Sivashy.

When I finally stopped rolling, my feet were buried in soft, dry sand. Down here, everything was calm, quiet, and most reassuring because no wild figures dressed in *budyennovtsy* cavalry caps were in sight.

With difficulty I got up, and, though limping because of my injured leg, started to run as fast as I could along the shore. It was hard for me to run on the uneven ground; sometimes my feet sank in the soft sand, and then, a few yards farther on, I got stuck in the muddy bottom of a swamp where I had to get into the water almost to my knees to get around the remnants of barbed wire barrier.

When I passed the trail leading to the station I saw people running down the slope toward the shore. I continued to run along the shoreline until I saw homes in the distance and turned onto a steep trail leading to them.

On the trail I heard running footsteps behind me, then a feeble female voice full of despair called, "Help me, in the name of God..." I looked back and saw a young woman. She was slim and wore a tight-fitting black coat with a small fur collar I ran back to her. In the vanishing evening light I cast a few glances at my unexpected companion. Her face was flushed from emotion and fatigue. Her big blue eyes were filled with fear over what had just happened to her. She looked at me in mute appeal for help.. Without a word, I grabbed her hand and together we continued to run in silence, not knowing where to, but with redoubled hopes of saving our lives.

In the sandy hollow of the precipice *budyennyets* was taking law into his own hands killing a clergymen, farther on another brave cavalryman was shooting elderly White officer – and our slim hope vanishes. Regrettably, we have no weapons to put a bullet in their heads! And this young woman pulls my hand from fear—my brain searches for supernatural – "how to save?"

Animals are so busy with their victims, that they do not notice us and we disappear behind protuberance in the slope.

As we climbed, the narrow trail became more solid and less steep, enabling us to run faster. After awhile we saw rooftops, then small huts scattered here and there, and slowly an entire small fishermen's village was spread out before our eyes. There were probably only a dozen-and-half huts. As we came closer we recognized a few *budyennyets* on their horses, moving here and there between the huts at the opposite end of the village.

We ran to the hut closest to the trail. The door opened, as if we had been expected, and an elderly fisherman invited us into his hut without any questions. The fisherman's wife showed us to a bench and brought us a big mug of water. "Take a short rest," suggested the fisherman, "and I will go out and see what's going on." And he left us with his wife. Thirstily, we gulped all the water. I got up and went to look out the small window. The fisherman's wife followed her husband, leaving us alone.

Suddenly the young woman began to shiver. Her face grew pale; she closed her

eyes and put her fingers against her temples. I went to her and bending over her asked gently, "What happened?"

She slowly opened her eyes and smiled faintly, "Don't you worry. It has already passed." The warmth of her voice made its way to my young heart. "You are my brother, and I am Nata," whispered the young woman.

"And I am Rostik," I answered, not yet understanding why she had decided that we should be brother and sister. Somebody came to the door and Nata put a silencing finger to her mouth. I pulled my tobacco box out of my pocket, put it on the table, and began to roll a cigarette.

The door squeaked and the fisherman came back inside. "Everything in the neighborhood is calm," he said. "The Reds are at the other end of the village. You should run to that hut, now!" And through a small window he showed me the last house to the south that was located farthest from the trail. "It will be safer for you there." He explained, "Their son is somewhere on the front with the Whites. The old man will gladly give you refuge. My house is first off the trail—everybody comes here first. The Reds will come to look here pretty soon. You'd better hurry, while it is still quiet over there." My young companion and I thanked the kind fisherman and his wife for their help and stepped outside.

We hurriedly made our way to our new refuge. An elderly man was standing near the door of his hut. The nets hanging on the south side of the dwelling indicated that its owner still labored at his trade despite his advanced age that was asking already to take a rest. He greeted us as though he already knew why we came. He swiftly led us into the hut and then into a second room where no unexpected visitor could see us.

The fisherman's wife brought us two chairs and put them away from the windows near a brick nook in chimney's wall called a stove couch. She asked us to sit there while her husband kept watch on the movement of the Reds in the neighborhood.

We sat silently and listened attentively for a while to what was going on outside the walls of the poor hut. Then I felt the urge to smoke but remembered that I had left my tobacco box on the table at the first hut. I took off the soldier's overcoat and my cap and told Nata that I would run to get it and quickly exited.

I almost reached the first fisherman's dwelling when I saw a *budyennyets* astride a horse behind a fence near an outhouse. The Red saw me, too, and probably noticed the bright shoulder straps on my English uniform that identified me as a White. I couldn't run, I was far from both huts, and there was no place to hide nearby.

*Budyennyets* urged his horse to jump over the fence that divided us. But the horse only pranced and was not willing to obey despite being spurred by her master.

A stream of curses poured from the Red's lips, he pulled out his revolver and began frantically shooting at me. "One, ...two, ...three, ...four, ...five..." I counted the shots, unable to move; I just stood there frozen. The horse continued to prance and the Red couldn't take aim at me. The bullets went deep into the ground, or flew to the right or left of me, or over my head.

Suddenly I heard a whistling sound of an approaching artillery shell and instinctively threw myself down to the ground among some dry weeds and covered my head with both hands. The close, loud explosion followed. The shelling from the peninsula began. The shell exploded almost a few steps from me. When the cloud of flying soil settled, I raised my head and saw that the *budyennyets* was lying on the

ground on my side of the fence with his arms spread out. His horse was free, running from the scene of the explosion.

I ran quickly to the first fisherman's hut. As he opened the door for me, the terrified fisherman crossed himself and said, "God, my dear God, I thought he would kill you!"

"No, it was not my time to die, yet," I answered, trying to conceal that I was scared. Then I added proudly, "But the *budyennovyets* was killed probably by the White artillery shell fired from Crimea..."

"That's what it was, that explosion?" asked the fisherman.

"I believe so," I replied and then explained why I came back, "I had to return to pick up my tobacco box; I left it on your table."

"You should be more careful," the fisherman warned. "The Reds are everywhere, and you should have at least removed the field-jacket. Those bright shoulder straps could be seen from a mile away, and the Red devils will shoot at them at once. You could have asked Vasily to get your tobacco box. They don't shoot at us fishermen so quickly as those of you in uniform."

I tried to excuse myself, "You are right, *khosyain*,<sup>8</sup> but I needed to smoke so badly that I couldn't wait!"

"This is from being agitated," explained the fisherman.

"Do you want to try my tobacco?" I offered.

"No, no, thank you very much," the fisherman readily refused. "I smoke only *makhorka*.<sup>9</sup> Tobacco is not strong enough for me; it doesn't satisfy my craving for a smoke."

As we were talking, we heard more explosions. But now the shells were falling farther to the north of the fishermen's village, where most of the Reds were concentrated. I was right, the Whites were shelling from Crimea. An idea flashed in my mind, "Maybe it would be worthwhile to take advantage of the Reds' confusion and try to reach the Chongarsky Bridge now."

When I returned to the second hut, *khosyaika*<sup>10</sup> admonished me, "Your wife is worrying about you! Hurry and calm her down."

"My wife?" I thought, "What is this? Maybe Nata changed her idea about our being brother and sister and told them that we are husband and wife". I rushed into the other room. The anxious look in Nata's wide-opened eyes and something more than just worry greeted me. A slight smile of joy illuminated her beautiful, delicate face.

"The shell fell somewhere very close here. I wanted to run..." she said in a trembling voice.

"Run where? And why?" I questioned her, looking deep into her worried eyes, and a glimmer of hope, of something new not known before, filled my young heart.

"I wanted to make sure, if nothing bad had happened to you," Nata said softly and somewhat embarrassed.

"Yes, a White shell fell quite close to me, near the hut where we first stopped." I said it almost casually to reassure her, "But, you see, I am alive and the *budyennovyets* who was trying to shoot me is dead."

"Oh, my God! I felt that you were in danger..."

"I hurried back," I added, "to tell you about my idea. As you can hear, the White artillery from Crimea has begun shelling the Reds. They will probably pound them for a

while. The Reds will be in disarray for some time. Now is a good time for us to try to sneak through without taking a big risk. I think we should make a run now for Chongarsky Bridge." It seemed that I was reasoning not only with Nata, but was also trying to reassure myself that my plan was correct and it was worth to take a chance.

"No, Rostik, we better wait until night. I am too tired and don't want to leave this safe place now," Nata pleaded.

The old fisherman overheard our discussion from the other room and stepped in. "It is too dangerous to try to reach the Chongarsky Bridge now," he said. "The Red horsemen are scouring the village. They are trying to be secure for the night."

"But staying here is even more dangerous," I replied.

"No, Rostik, we should wait!" Nata supplicated. "*Khosyaika* told me that we might stay here overnight."

I suddenly made a chivalrous decision not to leave a defenseless woman to the mercy of faith, "Well, all right, I am remaining here only for your sake."

Once the argument was settled, the old fisherman suggested to Nata and me to change our clothes. His wife opened a big trunk full of old peasant's clothing. I removed my English field jacket with the bright shoulder straps, pulled out the bottoms of the trousers tucked in the boots to cover them. *Khosyaika* found an old somewhat tightly fitting jacket and kosovorotka<sup>11</sup> for me. "It's my son's clothing," she explained.

For Nata she found a peasant's blouse and a gathered skirt. Then she covered Nata's head with a white kerchief and skillfully tied it in a peasant style. After we changed our clothes, *khosyaika* quickly hid my field jacket, soldier's overcoat, and peak-cap, and Nata's clothing and black coat in the bottom of the trunk carefully covering it with the peasants' clothes. Then she left Nata and me alone in the second room, leaving the door half-open to allow a streak of faint light from a flickering oil lamp placed in the middle of the table in the kitchen where she was cooking the supper.

For a while Nata and I listened to the sounds of the exploding shells that were falling farther and farther north from the village and finally stopped.

The fisherman entered and invited us for the supper. Although we did not eat the whole day, we did not feel hungry, and in one voice we thanked and decline the invitation of the generous host.

He left us again alone. The door was almost closed. We heard a calm talking and the ringing sound of dishes.

In the twilight I was silently observing Nata—a newcomer in my life—trying to read her thoughts and feelings on her face. Apparently, she was observing me too. I felt as she was breathing deeply the fresh air of Sivashy coming from the open *fortochka*<sup>12</sup> and looking at me with unspoken curiosity, as if she wanted to find out more about me.

Trying to interrupt the silence and to distract myself from the heavy thoughts, I asked, "How did you get caught in this unfortunate situation?"

"Not so loud, Rostik," she warned. "They could hear us..." Then she added with a slight embarrassment, "You should get used to talking to me, as if we are...you know, husband and wife. Otherwise you might make mistakes in some dangerous situation."

"Well, I think that the danger is over...I mean, for you!"

"Let's hope you are right!" said Nata, and then tried to answer my question. "You were asking how I got here. Well, I was traveling from home to Crimea."

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"I am originally from Bachmut."

"I was asking where you are traveling from now." I clarified my question.

"A-a-a..." said Nata, like she finally understood my question. "Now I am traveling from Novo-Alexeyevka. My home is far from here, my parents remained there... And here is all very temporary... You see what is happening to us? It is better not to ask too many questions; if we get caught it would be safer."

I thought that maybe the reason she did not want to run across the bridge when I suggested it earlier was that she had decided to return to Bachmut to her parents' home.

"Do you want to wait here until the encircling is over and then return back home?" I asked. "I am from Nikitovka, and I can accompany you all the way to Bachmut." I really didn't plan to return home at that moment, but I suggested this only to find out where she really wanted to go.

"No, no, until the Bolsheviks are there I shall never return to that town!" she answered, emphasizing the word "never."

"Why then after the Whites started the shelling didn't you want to go with me across the bridge to Crimea?" I asked.

Nata kept silent for a while like she was carefully thinking what she should answer, then touched my hand and said, "You have heard what the fisherman told us, that it was too dangerous."

"But tomorrow it could be even more dangerous," I replied.

"Then maybe we can try it tonight?" she asked insecurely.

"No!" I said firmly. "At night I cannot risk it with you!"

"And alone?" questioned Nata.

"Alone I was ready to run an hour ago."

"Crazy! You young men, all of you are mad, ready to fly toward the danger! Many of you are perishing for this reason!"

Nata exclaimed in a manner that seemed unusual for her, as if she had been holding those words to herself for a long time and finally was able to say them aloud.

I got excited too. "Not simply going toward the danger, but defying danger to save the Holy Russia!"

"Russia is not demanding anybody to sacrifice himself needlessly!" And Nata abruptly concluded our discussion. "We have talked enough for today." She got up and went to the door.

During our long conversation we heard that *khosyaika* was preparing the supper. The clatter of the crockery and the smell of boiled fish were tempting our hungry stomachs, and we finally realized that we had nothing to eat the whole day.

Through the half-open door Nata saw a young woman with a baby entering the hut. "Good evening to you," the young woman greeted the fisherman and his wife. "I was waiting for the shelling to stop, I didn't want to scare the baby. It is all quiet now, but the Red horsemen are still going from hut to hut searching for the Whites."

"You are just in time for supper," replied *khosyaika*.

The fisherman came to the door and pointing at Nata said to the young woman, "We have guests for tonight, young husband and wife." Then he invited again Nata and me to share the meal with them. This time we did not decline the invitation.

*Khosyaika* placed a pot with the hot fish soup, called *ukha*, and a big wooden

ladle in the middle of the plain rustic table. Beside the pot she put a round loaf of dark peasant's bread, a big knife, and a container with sea salt. The deep earthen tureens and the wooden spoons were already piled up on one side of the table. The fisherman took one tureen and served himself by scooping the big ladle of *ukha*, then passed the ladle to me and I followed his example. Nata was next to serve herself; the fisherman's wife and daughter-in-law were the last.

Next fisherman cut a large slice of bread from the loaf and passed the bread and the big knife to me and I, to Nata. When the meal was in front of each of us, the fisherman bowed his head and all followed his example. We listened to his prayer and crossed ourselves after saying "Amen!" Then we ate in silence. No one was asking us any questions. Who, why, where we were from? It was clear that these things were better left unsaid. However, after the meal was over, the fisherman warned me, "There might be some visits by the Red horsemen and it will be better to get ready for them."

The fisherman told me to sit on one of the three benches standing against the wall, the one farthest from the entrance door. He gave me a pair of worn-out shoes and a wooden toolbox and said, "You will be Nikolka. When some unexpected 'guests' arrive, start to remove the soles from the shoes." Then he turned to Nata and said: "And you will be..."

"Nata," she suggested promptly.

"Well, Nata, you will be the young mother." Nata nodded her head in agreement. "Mar'ya," he called his wife, who was busy clearing the table, "adjust her kerchief and have her sit on a bed." Then he asked his daughter-in-law to give her baby to Nata to hold, while she herself could find something to mend.

Fisherman's wife arranged the white kerchief on Nata's head the way it is used by the village's women and accommodated her on a huge family bed; daughter-in-law handed her the baby and began to sew something.

For himself the fisherman brought in from the outside some nets to repair and put them in front of the center bench next to the one where I was sitting; the other near the door was left empty for the 'guests'. They did all this so quickly and efficiently, it seemed to me that they had done this many times before. It was a perfect picture of the poor fisherman's family doing their evening chores.

We didn't have to wait long—as soon as we sat in our places, the clatter of the horse's hoofs was heard nearing the hut. Without knocking, one very young *budyonnyets* entered the door.

"Hul-lo, fishermen!" he greeted in a friendly manner and asked, "Do you by any chance have some Whites in here?"

"How could they be here?" answered the old fisherman calmly. "As you can see, there is hardly room for us in this small hut!"

*Budennoyets* settled himself on the free bench near the door and pulled out a couple of apples from a pocket of his military coat and offered the apples to us. He proudly told us that his cavalry unit had taken those apples away from one rich Tartar farmer, who was bringing several baskets to the market in Militopol. After this explanation we all politely refused the offer.

*Budennoyets* was a very talkative fellow and he was so pleased with himself boasting about military deeds and victories of his unit – something like taking away the apples from the Tartar – and, probably, was talking to satisfy his own ambition that he

couldn't notice that nobody was listening. All in the room were immersed in their own thoughts and fears and were waiting impatiently for him to leave the hut.

Fisherman noticed that I did not know how to work with the shoes and caled, "Hey, Nikolka, put those old shoes aside, I need these nets to be repaired for the next time we go fishing. Check them out, would you!" He moved a part of the nets that he was repairing on my knees covering my military boots that were to obviously sticking out. I did not know how to begin the new job and aimlessly handled the nets, once in a while glancing at Nata. Sometimes she was casting her furtive glance at me and our eyes occasionally met.

Occasionally *budennoyets* focused his eyes on Nata. Being observed by him, she felt nervous and the fear of this close encounter with the Red soldier colored scarlet her cheeks. She kept her eyelids semi-closed and her head bent down watching the baby in her lap. With one hand she was supporting the baby's head and with the other holding a pacifier that the sleeping baby was no longer sucking.

I watched Nata, too. Only I could understand the troubled look in her eyes and the emotional turmoil she felt at that time. To the casual observer she was an image of a young happy mother full of tender love for her baby.

For a while my romantic imagination sidetracked me from the reality of the danger that Nata and I were in. I saw only an idyllic picture—a young Russian woman in all her glorious and exciting beauty, her exceptional charm and humility, goodness of heart, and sadness in her soul.... This image was worthy to be put on canvas by the brush of the most talented painter...

At that moment I wished that there was no war and that life would continue on the old proven path. That I was here in this poor fisherman's hut and there, on the big rustic bed, was my wife Nata holding our infant... In this poetic fancy I pictured my love and happiness with Nata.

Was it possible that poverty could break the happiness of love? It is not gold that makes people happy?! There is nothing more precious on earth than all-embracing love—all world treasures are nothing compared to it! One cannot buy it or sell it but if benevolent faith makes a gift of it, one finds great Happiness.

And then in the poor little fisherman's hut the two lives would light up with emeralds and diamonds, the sooty walls would adorn themselves with gold and silver, the poor dwelling would transform itself in marble palace; and the Sivash would transform itself into a calm sea, bondless and with clean, clear water.

But the life now is not poetry, not a fable. Dressed in the Red Army uniform wearing helmet with the red star, was sitting *budyennovets*, one of those who are bringing the ill fate on Holy Russia, the rubber, killer, executioner of Russian people, who has destroyed already its million strong happiness.

The presence of the talkative fellow was not indifferent any more. I look in the eyes of my Nata and see in them my poor Motherland bleeding in unequal battle and I am overwhelmed with desire to put my life to save her. And I was ready to jump from the bench...

"Nikolka, find the pacifier – baby dropped it," – Nata's voice, interrupted this vision and brought my thoughts to reality, sobering me from my burning desire to jump on the Red army soldier to annihilate the enemy.. I picked the pacifier from the floor. The "young mother" looked at me with worry and supplication. And I obediently returned



to work on the nets.

At that moment, unaware of the tension in the room, *budyennovyets* got up and saluted us, "Well, good night to all of you!" And he walked out.

The fisherman suggested that we all remain in our places for a while longer. "There could be more of 'them' coming in. They would be less suspicious if we were all here in the open. I will go outside to check what is going on." I got up too, but the fisherman told me to stay inside and explained, "It is safer for you here; there are not too many young men remaining in the village. Some, like my son, joined the Whites, and the others are hiding from being drafted by the Reds."

In our attention to all suspicious sounds from the outside Nata and I exchanged a few short phrases. *Khosyaika* and her daughter-in-law were talking to each other in subdued voices. The tension of waiting slowed the time. The fisherman returned and said only, "They are coming..." and returned repairing nets. I followed his example.

Momentarily, two young *budyennovyets* entered the hut and greeted us, "Hul-lo! Humble fishermen!" The old fisherman answered for all of us. Then one of them said, "We are *budyennovtsy*, we are chasing the Whites and shall soon liberate the Crimea!" All in the room listened in silence.

*Budyennovtsy* sat on the bench, removed their guns and began playfully to show off that they knew how to use them, and completed their show by cleaning and polishing them. They smiled jokingly at the two young women and bragged about how they bravely "pushed the Whites into the sea." The fisherman just nodded his head, the others listened without comment.

The fisherman noticed that I was aimlessly moving the nets and didn't know what to do with them. He got up and told me that this could be done tomorrow in the daylight, and gave me back the old shoe, asking me to see if it could be repaired. I put the nets down on the clay floor, leaving some to cover my boots, and began to inspect carefully from all sides the old worn out shoe, as if estimating the possibilities of giving it a second life.

When the guns were finally polished, the young *budyennovtsy* asked *khosyaika* to give them some water to drink. They looked at the large family and consulted with each other about something, nodding their heads in agreement. Then one of them told the old fisherman that, since there were too many people in this hut, they would look for some other place to stay overnight.

After the *budyennovtsy* were gone, the old fisherman told his wife to accommodate Nata and me in the next room. She came with the oil lamp and placed it on a bench. Then she took two old blankets and the pillows filled with straw from the shelf and placed them on the stove-couch that was built into the hollow wall and was heated by the stove from the other room.

"Climb up on the stove-couch," she told us, "it will be nice and warm there, and quiet. And don't worry—nobody can harm you here tonight. We will blow out the oil lamp soon. It is better not to have light at this hour of the night." Then she added with a deep sigh, "I just hope that some merciful soul would give shelter to my son in his time of need." She allowed us the time to climb on the stove-couch and wished us good night.

As she was leaving the room taking the oil lamp with her, the shadows were jumping on the walls from the moving flame. Nata pointed on one of the walls, "Look, Rostik, at that shadow, how grotesque and distorted it is, it resembles our lives..." The

flame flickered and the shadow dashed around the room, jumped toward us, and finally dissolved in the darkness.

"No, Nata," I disagreed with her, "life is not like that shadow. Yes, there are many ugly things in life, but there is much more beauty around us. It just happens that not every person can always see it and often cannot discover the beauty in themselves."

"Do you really believe this to be true?" she asked me with doubt in her voice.

"Tell me," I asked, "do you see the beauty in yourself?"

"In myself? A beauty? Rostik, I am very ordinary, very common," she answered.

"But I can see your beauty!" I answered with ardor.

"It is too dark in here to see anything," she quick-wittedly replied.

After this not so subtle declaration from me, for some time we lay next to each other in silence and listened to the sounds of the night, ready at the first sign of danger to jump up and run, but... we were not sure to where. In a sign of reassurance, I took in my hand the smooth, soft hand of my unexpected "wife" and held it and stroked it. From time to time I kissed her fingers and sensed the faint scent of her skin. The spark in my heart was starting to transform into a flame. I wanted to know who had performed this imaginary matrimony. Was it Nata, who told the *khosyaika* that we were married, or was it the fisherman or his wife who invented it to make the disguise more real? Was it just pure chance or predestination? I wanted to find out what Nata felt in her heart.

It was so hot on the stove couch that Nata broke the silence and asked me to move to the clay floor. Quietly we put our pillows and blankets down on the cool clay. The moon was shining down through the small window and I saw the face of Nata illuminated with a soft and mysterious light. It magically transformed my perception.

I peered at the beautiful features of her face, her sparking eyes, outlined with long eyelashes and fine eyebrows, at her neat contours of half-open lips, reminding me the petals of the opening rosebud. Her youth and freshness infatuated me and her beauty cast a spell upon my whole being.

The spark in my heart flared up passions into unstoppable fire, and it seemed that we would burn that night in the flames of great love.

Nata was silent. Was she waiting words or silent caresses, was she thinking about the past or the future, was she seeking the solution from the impossible, or was she deciding to accept the happy chance for saving herself, was he thinking at that moment about me, or were her thoughts far away in the steppes of Tavria? I don't know, but the flame of great candid feeling burst out and I passionately pressed my lips against her lovely little lips...

I started to kiss her tenderly, stroke gently her silky hair, murmured magic words; and gently caressed her with adoration, like she was a precious and delicate statuette made of finest china. And I felt that she reciprocated with sincere feminine joy...

We were burning with desire. For a few moments we forgot who we were and why we were there in that poor fisherman's hut. The terrible day endured by us was melting away in the flame of youthful love and mysterious distance of oblivion... And we could have burned in the spontaneous oven of our passion, when... Suddenly, Nata heartbrokenly whispered, "Rostik, my dear, I am married..."

As I heard those words, I got up at once. It was past midnight. The moon was shining through the window like before, but its magic had disappeared. I felt defeated. A beautiful dream of happiness that had overwhelmed me for only a few hours was

crushed in a thousand pieces and the sharp fragments were piercing my heart and painfully penetrating in my soul. It felt like many wounds in my body were bleeding, leaving physical pain in the whole body. I felt chilly, terribly tired, and surrounded by emptiness.

But I wanted to convey my gratitude to sweet Nata for those few miraculous moments of happiness that she bestowed on me. On my knees I bent over her and saw the tears shining in her eyes. I kissed her tenderly on the cheek and said, "Forgive me, Nata, I didn't know, I didn't even guess."

"And I, Rostik, couldn't tell you before," she answered gently. "But our passion would have brought us too far. It would not have been right, I love my husband."

I reassured her, "Nata, don't you worry, I understand. You are trying to join him. I will be very happy if I could help you get out of here. I will not leave you until we reach Crimea."

Somebody cautiously knocked at the entrance door to the hut. Fisherman, probably was not asleep. He opened the door without asking. I got up and opened slightly the door to the other room. I saw the fisherman opening the door and a tall stately man in White military uniform quietly entered the room. In a low voice he asked if the fisherman could help him change his uniform into civilian clothing. I understood that it was safe and opened the door. The men trembled.

"Don't worry, I have already changed my clothes, but didn't dare run across the bridge yet with my wife," I explained to him and presented myself.

The man replied, "I am General Popov, the Chief of the Red Cross." And he added with urgency in his voice, "Please, help me, I want to run across the Chongarsky Bridge tonight. I want to reach Crimea before dawn."

The fisherman started to pull out the old clothing of the big trunk to find a jacket that would fit the general. The night was very cold and I offered the general the soldier's overcoat with cut off shoulder straps.

"I guess that it is better to be caught dressed as a soldier, than as a general," he commented jokingly. "In any case, I could always throw it into Sivashy." He took off a golden ring from his finger and handed it to the old fisherman.

"God forbid!" exclaimed the fisherman. "I will not take it! You better hurry! We will pray to God that He protects you."

But the general put the ring on the trunk saying, "Well, then save it for me. If I get safely to Crimea, I will not need it. If the Reds capture me, they will take it from me; anyway, it is safer if I leave it with you."

General entrusted me with his wallet containing documents and money asking me to contact him at the command post as soon as I get to Dzhankoy.

The fisherman and I wished the general good luck and he walked swiftly south toward the road to Sivashy.

In a few minutes we heard again the same careful knocking. The fisherman, again without asking, opened the door. A large broadshouldered man entered and it seemed that he filled the entire room. This time it was a colonel, whose family, regrettably, I forgot. He also asked to help him to change to civilian clothing. This time it was harder to help him, because there were no items of his size. With great difficulty we helped him to pull up some old slacks and a warm jacket. On his head he put a visor-cap offered by the fisherman. The nightguest, changed into a poor muzhik, left following the footsteps

of the general.

Some officers and soldiers followed, but the fisherman was so resourceful, that he was able to disguise them, that no one could recognize them being the military men. I was delighted with his Russian Christian soul, who probably, had saved lives of many men.

From the light band in the east were beginning to pierce through the golden sunrays. The new day began. Worrysome thoughts were pouring like a stream one after another. I was trying to find the way how to save Nata. I was sitting next to her and admiring her beautiful but somewhat pale and tired face, I was whispering, "Even if it would cost me my life, but I will save you, I will break you loose from the deadly encirclement. You will find your husband again and the Lord would bless you for the happy life..."

Nata was laying with the closed eyes, but she was not asleep. She was listening to my ravings, ravings of a madman, intoxicated, stricken by the great emotion. She opened her eyes and asked, "And you?"

"I? I don't know, Nata. The woman like you I, probably, would never encounter in my life. Would never get to know such love. If I destined to remain alive, your name would remain holy for me and in my prayers I would always pray the Almighty that he would protect you from evil.

"Let's go outside. I need to sober a little after sleepless night, and it is stuffy in the room," she asked me.

We waked out dressed in peasants' clothing. The bright rays of morning sun were caressing Nata's pale and tired face, which seemed even more beautiful to me than in the moonlight last night and I was grateful to destiny who had sent me such happiness to be near her, to hear for a while peaceful melody of her voice, to feel her breath full of emotion.

Early in the morning all around was quiet, it seemed that everything was lying still in a deep sleep. Nobody was around. We walked to the slope toward the Sivashy to explore what was going on. There was no sign either of *budyennovtsy* or of Whites.

Standing at the edge of a sandy slope I was looking at the white line of the road leading toward the Crimea.

"Maybe, now?" asked Nata.

"Not yet, we have to be sure. I have no right to put your life in jeopardy."

"But when? There is nobody around now," she prompted me.

"I think that we will find out very soon. If the Whites last night brought the artillery into a position to reach beyond the village, they must have prepared the defenses by now," I said with an air of complete confidence.

Here from the high ground, I could observe the narrow, sandy serpentine road leading to Crimea. "Nata," I said, "look at the road. Do you see the ditches on both sides of it? Those are gutters for the rainwater." Then I explained, "Well, we have to follow the road for quite a while until we reach the Chongarsky Bridge. If there is an exchange of fire or if somebody shoots at us, don't run on the road, get down in the ditch and if necessary lie down and crawl or creep. Stay close me and listen to what I may tell you." I warned Nata what could happen during the escape, while I considered all possible alternatives from the advantageous height. "I think that we have a good chance to reach Crimea", I concluded.

We returned to the fisherman's hut. With the tension of waiting, time passed painfully, slowly. After midday the White artillery began firing again, the shells falling far beyond the village. The fisherman meanwhile collected information from the others in the village that all *budyennovtsy* had left during the night.

I made a decision—now was the right time to attempt our escape. In a commanding voice I called, "Nata, get ready! It's time to go!" Then I asked the fisherman, "*Khosyain*, could we please have our clothing back? I will feel safer dressed in my uniform."

The fisherman pulled my English field jacket and peak cap out of his trunk. Nata had put on her town clothing and her black coat. As the fisherman was placing his old clothing back in the big trunk, he reasoned, "If tonight we have more guests who need to change from White uniforms, we can dress one more to look like a fisherman."

Nata and I expressed our gratitude to the fisherman and his wife for their hospitality, for giving us a refuge in their fisherman's hut, for the food they shared with us, and for saving our lives. I said, "We don't have anything valuable to give you for all your trouble."

"God forbid, we don't want anything from you!" said the fisherman.

And his wife replied, "Any mother would have done the same hoping that her son would be treated well by some other mother."

Nata embraced *khosyaika* and said she wished her that her son would return home safely and soon. The fisherman gave us his blessings for the road. And we quickly left toward the road for Chongar.

As we walked out of the hut, Nata commented, "What a simple and kind people we still have in Russia! They didn't ask us to pay for anything they offered. They helped us just because we needed it."

"And who knows how many others they will help tonight... and tomorrow... and the day after tomorrow," I added.

As we reached the road to Chongar, we could see the railroad and the Chongarsky Railroad Bridge, which went straight across the Sivashy from the mainland to Crimea. We needed to make a run on that bridge and we ventured on the road that led to it. From the road we could see that there were no guards on this side of it and that was a good sign that the Reds were probably not there.

This deduction relaxed our caution and almost became fatal. The sound of bullets over our heads made us duck, jump into the ditch and run, bending forward. Nata was breathing heavily and I was afraid she would fall behind. I grabbed her hand and tried to pull her close to me. A machine gun rattled and bullets hit the pavement slightly ahead of us. I ordered Nata to lie down in the ditch. Then hoping that the shots were not fired by the Reds, I decided to gamble and to show a sign of surrender. I took a white handkerchief from my pocket, tied it around my cap, and raised it above the level of the road. The machine gun stopped its rattle and we proceeded, creeping low to the ground.

All of a sudden, the ditch became wider and deeper and we found ourselves in a recently made deep trench. "Remains only little bit more, I think that they noticed us... Be calm, we are already saved," I reassure her. Nata is breathing heavily and is trying not to remain behind, fearing to slow down our progress forward. Suddenly we hear a warning, "Stop! Who is there?" A sentinel appeared with the gun pointed toward me. We both recognized each other's White uniforms. The sentinel called for his officer and I

reported my rank and my brigade.

"The name of your commander?" insisted the officer. I answered. "And who is she?" pointing at Nata, asked the officer again.

"I am an officer's wife," answered Nata for herself in a decisive manner. "My husband is..." and she turned her face away from me and whispered to the officer the name and the division of her husband. Then pointing at me she explained in a normal voice, "He is accompanying me. We are trying to go across the bridge."

"Please, Madam, you may go safely through the trench. Farther on, there is a no-man's land and you will be on your own. Good luck!" Then he gave a command to his soldiers, "Let these people pass!"

We walked through the very short trench guarded only by a half dozen soldiers. The trench ended in the natural hollow in the sandy soil. After that, all the way toward the Chongarsky Bridge was really a no-man's land.

My contused leg that had improved during my stay at the fisherman's hut started to hurt again. It was becoming dark when we reached the bridge.

Chongarsky Railroad Bridge had a very narrow walk with wide gaps between the planks and we had to be careful to step in the right spot. The strong northerly wind threatened to blow us off into the water. I wore only my light English field jacket and froze all the way through to the bones. Nata's coat could not protect her from the frigid wind and she was shivering at each sharp blow. But she was trying not to show that she was freezing. We held on to each other, I helped her to keep steady balance, and she helped me not to slip down with my lame leg. It seemed we would never reach the far end of the bridge. Nata would ask me once in a while, "How far do we have to go?" When we finally stepped on solid ground, we embraced each other with relief. Only then we realized that it was already dark and the friendly moon illuminated our way.

My leg by now had become swollen and I was dragging it on the ground. I was leaning on Nata's arm and she gave me as much support as her strength allowed her. After midnight we reached a small farmstead with a few peasants' huts clustered together. Unsuccessfully we tried to find a place to warm up and take a rest. All huts were full of people sleeping on the floor all the way to the entrance doors. Finally we stumbled on a very small structure that turned out to be a summer kitchen. The red flickering could be seen in the big kitchen stove. A faint moonlight was barely penetrating through the small window, but it was enough to find a small empty bench and and sat close to the open stove door. We began to revive the fire by adding straw and to warm up our frozen bodies. But the rude swearing of the soldier sleeping on top of the stove forced us to abandon that place. It seems that in the darkness we did not see him and almost roasted him.

Cheking into several other huts, we finally found one? Which seemed to us to be empty. Faint moonlight hardly penetrated through the small windows, but it was enough to see the poor environment. On the right stood a long narrow bench, on the left – a big peasant's stove, from which was blowing warmth so needed to us, half-frozen and tired. We quietly moved the bench closer to the stove and and curled up close to each other and fell asleep, abandoning ourselves to the warmth and to a liberating feeling of safety from the Reds. lied down, enjoying warmth, silence and tranquility.

I don't know, if we slept or simply lost consciousness, finally feeling safe. But, at the first light of daybreak we awoke at the same time and heard the heavy breathing of

many people in that small structure that had filled to capacity during the night. There was no room left on the earthen floor. Nata and I carefully walked between the sleeping people and went out into the courtyard.

Outside we encountered a sharp morning chill. On the horizon the sun was just starting to show its first rays, promising warmth during the day. Nata and I decided to walk southwest on the wide unpaved cart road leading toward the railroad station. As we walked along the road, we could see the salty Crimean steppe become multicolored with the groups of refugees. All were rushing in the same direction toward the railroad station and the small town. There they were hoping to find information about the front, and maybe to find transportation toward the larger centers of population, where they could easier disappear in the crowd if the Whites could not stop further advancement of the Reds.

All the way we were talking, but about what? I don't know. I only know, that the crossing of Chongarsky Bridge started to show up on my leg, so swollen I could barely put my weight on it. I felt feverish and was shivering, although it was quite warm in the sun. I felt that I could lose consciousness at any time and Nata was worrying about me. When with her help I managed to reach the station of Taganash, I could barely understand all that Nata was telling me.

I remember only that she told someone that she was an officer's wife and that she was trying to reach him. As if in a fog I heard her voice requesting somebody on the station's medical unit to place me in a hospital in Dzhankoy.

I remember her saying, "Good-bye, Rostik!" And my last attempt was to follow her with my eyes as she left. Nata, the young woman who suddenly appeared in my life and awakened in me the flame of first love and gave me a few hours of happiness.

I frantically screamed, "Nata, don't go away!" And then I lost consciousness.

## A Defeat in Crimea

It was on my eighteenth birthday, at the end of October by the old calendar of the catastrophic year 1920, when the fight of the Whites to save Holy Russia was coming close to a dismal outcome. Thousands of exhausted Russian men wearing Russian and English uniforms swarmed over the wide, autumn-gloomy steppes of Tavria, the southern Ukraine, right at the doors of Crimea. They were powerless to stem the tide of raging, advancing Red cavalry that outnumbered them many times over. The cavalry of Bolshevik General Budenny and the Red infantry of Siberians drafted by Bolsheviks and sent there to “liberate” Crimea from the last stronghold of the Whites were too great an enemy.

Disarranged and disconnected White military units tried to avoid, or desperately fought to break free of the Red’s encirclement. All units anxiously sought to find a way to Perikop and the Sivashy, or to the Chongarsky Railroad Bridge. They hoped these obstacles would serve as natural fortifications that would help them to hold back the advancing wild Red hordes.

In one of the Red artillery shelling, a few days before my eighteenth birthday, I suffered a contusion in my left leg, my left eardrum was ruptured from the air pressure of the explosion, and I lost my hearing. I was transferred to a transport unit that was rapidly retreating south toward the Black Sea.

Suddenly a scream resounded, “We are surrounded!” All hope of escape disappeared in seconds. Drivers and soldiers jumped down from the wagons and began to run in every direction, trying to lose themselves in the chaos of running people and frightened horses pulling unattended wagons.

I also ran as fast as I could and managed to reach and cross the Chongarsky Bridge with a companion in misfortune, Nata – a White officer’s wife who was trying to reach her husband in Crimea.

The crossing of Chongarsky Bridge started to show up on my leg, it was so swollen I could barely put my weight on it. I felt feverish and was shivering, although it was quite warm in the sun. I felt that I could lose consciousness at any time. With the help of Nata, I managed to reach the station of Taganash. As if in a fog I heard her voice requesting somebody on the station’s medical unit to place me in a hospital in Dzhankoy.

After I was kept a few days in the small railroad hospital on the station of Taganash, the fever diminished and my leg slightly improved, but I had not regained complete consciousness and was transferred to the larger military hospital in Dzhankoy. There, I gradually began to perceive what was going on around me. The sounds of artillery fire were moving closer and closer to Dzhankoy. Still half-conscious I pricked up my ears, “Where is it coming from?” My previous experience and training brought my senses on full alert, and listening to the other wounded soldiers’ comments and observing what they were doing put me on the lookout.

One day I saw that those sick and wounded who were able to walk began to get



up from their beds, hurriedly dress and walk toward the hospital exit. Like in a dream, I followed their example and got to the railroad station. On my way I heard the comments of the fleeing wounded who were saying, "The battle for Crimea could be considered already lost. It will be the same catastrophe as it was in Novorossiysk, where hundreds of officers, soldiers, and refugees were not able to get to the ships on time and were taken as prisoners by the Reds, who cruelly executed them without any trial." I understood that it was time for me to take a train to Feodosia and winter out in my uncle Pyetr's home.

When I reached the railroad station of Dzhankoy, there was already a multitude of people gathered on the station platform, and I learned the Reds had already interrupted the railroad and that no trains were going south from there. I decided that walking alone was safer than together with other sick and wounded soldiers. I chose to follow the railroad tracks that would lead me in the right direction. With my lame leg I walked slowly but steadily without much rest. I was trying to gain some distance from the Reds before my leg became swollen again and forced me to stop for a longer rest.

When I found myself in the vicinity of the railroad station of Grammatikovo, my leg was so swollen that I could no longer walk. I stopped at the railway switch-point and asked the switchman to let me sleep overnight in his cabin. As a reference I told him that I was a nephew of Pyetr Makarovich Gladky, a stationmaster in Feodosia. But it became clear that this reference had backfired; the plate switchman didn't want anything to do with harboring the old master's relatives, as the Reds could be here at any time. I pleaded with him, but to no avail. Then I gave him an ultimatum, "I cannot walk anymore, if you don't let me in, I would sleep right here in front of your door." And I sat down on the steps. After a while the switchman's wife came out, invited me inside, gave me some water to drink, and shoved me to the bench, where she put an old blanket.

Early in the morning I started to walk toward the small town of Old Krym, located about one hundred-fourteen verst from the station of Dzhankoy. My paternal grandparents lived there and I was planning to stop there for several days to rest my leg before proceeding to Feodosia. It took me several days to get there, stopping to stay overnight at the railroad stations. To feed myself I bartered my military boots, which I could not wear anyway with my swollen leg, for an old pair of larger size shoes, some bread, and dry fruit.

By late afternoon I came to my grandparents' home. Reds had not reached the town of Old Krym yet. My grandfather, Makar, was glad to see me and we talked at length about the situation in Crimea and about the options I had for the near future. My grandmother, Yelena, was less impressed with my arrival, especially when the time came to feed me. She served the meager supper that was already prepared for the two of them and they had to divide it now with me. The food consisted of a watery soup with a few pieces of vegetables swimming in it that she said were left from what they grew in the summer in their garden. Then she carefully divided a handful of small pieces of dry bread in three parts to soak in the soup. After many days of being hungry and eating only stale bread and dry fruit, I ate the hot soup with pleasure. Grandmother Yelena was afraid that I would stay with them for long time and that they would have to feed me. She complained openly and profusely at the table that they did not have enough to eat for themselves, making me feel guilty of depriving them of food.

The next morning grandmother didn't get out of bed and was moaning and complaining of being sick. I suggested to Grandfather that he call a doctor. But he just waved his hand in a sign of resignation, telling me that this was one of her old tricks that she uses when the things are not going as she wants them to be. I understood that my grandmother didn't want me to stay and told to Grandfather that I was leaving right away that morning to stay with my uncle Pyetr. After all, there were only about twenty-five miles left to Feodosia. There I hoped that my uncle could keep me in his home for a while and feed one more mouth, which my grandparents could not afford, because the food and their resources were scarce.

In the middle of November, 1920, I finally reached my last refuge in Crimea, my uncle Pyetr's home. At that time the town was still in the hands of Whites.

After the death of his first wife, Pyetr Makarovich Gladky married Alexandra Ivanovna Tsarinova. They lived with their small daughter Xenia, and the two children from his first wife, a son Boris, who was about seven years old, and a daughter Lidia, about twelve years old. Pyetr Makarovich was the railroad stationmaster in Feodosia and was receiving good food rations at that time. I found his wife to be a very pleasant woman and she was good to her stepchildren and to me. There were no objections from her to keep me in their home for as long as it was necessary.

By the time I reached Feodosia there was no more organized resistance against the Reds by the Whites, who were in complete disarray and escaping on any available ship to Turkey, Rumania, and Greece. Then came the news that the Reds were closing in on Feodosia. Although this was expected for some time, it started confusion and panic; there were not enough ships to take all the White officers and soldiers who were waiting to embark. All were trying to escape the horrible executions, for which the Reds had become notorious everywhere, but in Crimea they were especially cruel because of the large concentration of White officers. In addition, the towns were full of refugees who, escaping from the Reds, had evacuated with their families from the northern parts of the country to Crimea.

Thousands of people were rushing about on the pier in Feodosia seeking salvation from the Reds. But in vain. The ships were standing far away on the roadstead and there was no way to reach them. Fear and despair seized everyone anticipating savage reprisal that seemed not possible to escape. The fears of these people became a horrifying reality when the Reds occupied Feodosia and all other towns in Crimea.

When I realized that one cannot get from the dry land to the ships, I was wandering on the narrow streets of the town, went to the harbor, looked at the port, observing closely women's faces. I was searching, I was calling that woman, who in the last day of my fight for Motherland had burst into my life and became a symbol of victory over the Evil. But she was gone? Taking with her the idea of my White fight on the Russian soil...

Did she go forever?

No. I am searching for this Russian woman more than thirty years. By the will of the nasty destiny, I ran all over Russian soil, I traveled through Europe, and now I am aiming to fly all over the world with hope that the little woman from Bakhmut would respond to the call for a fight for liberation of our Motherland.

"Nata, where are you?.."

## Bolsheviks in Feodosia

After the Reds occupied Feodosia<sup>1</sup> the infamous CheKa<sup>2</sup> began its bloody work of searching out and eliminating the White officers and soldiers that had the misfortune of finding themselves at the southern shore of Crimea too late to embark on the ships to Turkey, Rumania, Bulgaria, or Greece. There were no trials; CheKa was executing them by firing squad on the shore of the Black Sea.

During the first weeks CheKa didn't touch the local people and concentrated on non-residents, whom they considered to be either White officers dressed in civilian clothing, or the refugees who had escaped from the northern part of the country. Most of these people were suspected to be White sympathizers and antirevolutionary elements; all were referred to by one all-encompassing name, "enemies of the people," which really meant the enemies of the Bolsheviks. These people were taken by the CheKa agents from homes, caught at the railroad station, or arrested on the streets, and they usually disappeared without a trace.

One night I found a wounded man hiding in my uncle's outhouse. My uncle Pyetr took him in the house and helped him to bandage the wound. The man told us that he was arrested in the railroad station and was taken with others to the seashore and shot. He fell unconscious on the ground, and when he had regained his consciousness, he realized that he was only wounded in the leg. He stayed quietly in the pile of dead men until the executioners were gone. Then he got out from under the corpses that had been left on the shore to be removed by the night crew. When darkness fell over the macabre scene and he could hear only the sound of the waves landing on the shore, he crawled on the sidewalk and against the fences and houses until he found a refuge here. The man was grateful for our help and he left right away to hide elsewhere.

Later Pyetr Makarovich found out from the underground railroad news what was happening in the other stations, where the CheKa began to conduct a purge of the railroads employees—the cleanup of this important communication and transport system from all possible "enemies of the people." There, the CheKa agents were investigating all employees who occupied any position higher than a simple laborer or worker. Everywhere all old stationmasters were removed from their posts for no reason, were interrogated, arrested, and thrown into jails, and some disappeared. Their families could not get any information from the CheKa about what had happened to their loved ones.

Therefore, when one day the CheKa agents came to the railroad stationmaster office and gave Pyetr Makarovich a summons to appear the next day in the local CheKa, he understood that he couldn't remain one more hour in Feodosia. As soon as they were gone, he asked his assistant stationmaster to take over his duties and returned home unexpectedly in the middle of his shift. He told his surprised wife that he had to go on an urgent *komandirovka*, which meant a trip on employment related matters, and that he probably would be away for a few days. Very casually he said "good-bye" to her and to his children and asked me to see him off as far as a few blocks from his home.

On our way to the railroad station he told me the whole story about the summons and that he was escaping to Kharkov, where he had friends he could rely upon. He asked me to tell his wife about the summons only after a few weeks had gone by, and that I absolutely should not tell her where he would be hiding, because the CheKa agents knew how to get such information from the wives. "Tell her," he said, "when the time is right, I myself will let her know where I am and what she and the children should do to reach me." My uncle embraced me and asked me to help his family to go through the difficult times ahead of them. Then he looked at his watch and abruptly said, "It's time to go! I will arrive at the station just in time for the freight train going north."

Without any luggage that could make his departure too suspicious, he got on the first freight train going north. The old regulations hadn't changed yet, and as a railroad employee he could travel without being questioned as long as he was wearing his railway uniform and had his pass.

I remained with his family and followed my uncle's instructions of not telling his wife anything until later. The next day, early in the morning, two young CheKa agents came to search Pyetr Makarovich's home. From their behavior I deducted that they didn't know yet that he had escaped.

The agents dug in all drawers, looking for anything that could compromise him. They piled some papers and documents on his desk and among them I recognized one of my letters. I was terrified, because I knew what was written in it. I had written it soon after I got to the front and it was an inspiring letter full of youthful hope for the speedy victory of the Whites against the Reds. I looked at my aunt Alexandra and made a sign with my eyes and indicated with my head to get the agents out of the room. My aunt got the message, went to the kitchen, and from there cleverly invited the agents to have a cup of tea with her own homemade cherry jam. The trick worked out well. While my aunt was serving the tea in the kitchen, I quickly removed the letter from the pile and gave it to Varya, the niece of Alexandra Ivanovna, who hid it in her bosom. When the CheKa agents were gone, I got my letter back from Varya and destroyed the incriminating evidence.

After the escape of my uncle, my aunt was not able to receive her husband's food rations and could not provide for her children. I began to look for some kind of work to support myself and to help my uncle's family. Through the friends of my uncle I found a position as a telegrapher at the small railroad station of Saryhol, located not far from Feodosia.

However, I didn't have a chance to work there for long. On the third night, when I was working on the third shift, I answered a telephone call and a man asked me with the voice of official sternness, "Who is speaking?"

"I am a telegrapher," I answered very calmly, but my heart began to beat faster.

"What is your last name?" insisted the man.

I began to suspect that something unpleasant was coming up and reluctantly but still calmly answered, "My name is Gladky."

"Well, Gladky, come tomorrow morning to the CheKa Office," he ordered.

Now I knew that I should expect some trouble. But I answered in a steady voice, "Very well, I will come as soon as the first shift telegrapher comes in."

I thought about it. "How serious could it be? Maybe it is about my uncle Pyetr." And I planned and rehearsed all night what I would answer to all kinds of questions they

could ask.

In the morning I went to the CheKa Office. The CheKa agent by the name of Koshyrin began to interrogate me. He wanted to know where I came from and what I was doing here, and where my uncle was. It helped me that during the night I carefully planned my biography and told it in a relaxed tone of voice:

"I came from Nikitovka to Feodosia to visit my uncle. Here I caught a typhoid fever. When I got well, there were no more trains going north and I couldn't go home. Now I have found a place to work and want to stay here because I like the climate."

As for my uncle, I said, "He left on *komandirovka* and disappeared. Nobody knows what happened to him."

As I was telling my story became clear Koshyrin was not convinced I was telling him the truth because he arrested me. I was confined in the cellar for about two weeks, and during that time Koshyrin interrogated me every day. Each time he asked me to tell him my biography I repeated the same story. During those two weeks in prison I saw many White officers and soldiers being led from the CheKa prison to be shot on the seashore. It was clear that I could not change my story if I wanted to remain alive.

After the two weeks Koshyrin did let me go, but he instructed that I come back in a few weeks for further check-up. I resumed my work at the telegraph, and when I returned for the check-up Koshyrin asked me to watch and listen to the employees at the station and to report to him in person about any anti-Bolshevik individual. I thought that maybe Koshyrin had really believed my story, and even begun to trust me, because the next time I came for a check-up, I had an offer from him to take care of one farmstead. But I told him I was not used to that kind of work and would not know what to do there. However, I was very cautious with Koshyrin. I felt that in his CheKa agent's mind there might be only seconds separating trust from execution. Soon I decided, "It's time to go!"

I began to look for the first occasion to get on the freight train to get out of Crimea and told my aunt Alexandra about it. At that time my aunt had received a message from my grandmother Yelena through the railroad telegrapher, who was my uncle Pyetr's good friend. She was notifying the only son who was living close to her about the death of his father and was expecting him to come and help her with the funeral. Since my uncle was hiding in Kharkov, I immediately went to Sary Krym and helped my grandmother to arrange the simple funeral.

She was very upset that her son didn't come and that none of her other children could be notified because there were no regular means of communication with the mainland. Therefore, I was the only one representing the whole Gladky family. Only a few neighbors of my grandfather came to say good-bye. But my grandfather had a funeral that he would have wanted, with the traditional Russian Orthodox rites. The Bolsheviks hadn't had time yet to close the churches in Crimea and to arrest all the clergymen.

Knowing my grandmother's stinginess, I offered her what I had saved from my wages to pay for my grandfather's funeral and told her that she had to pay the rest herself because it was all that I had. After the funeral I told my grandmother that she should remain in her own home until her son Pyetr returned from up north, or until my father or her daughter Marusya could come and help her to make a decision about her future. I told her that I should depart soon to Nikitovka and would notify my father about

his father's death. She wanted to know how soon somebody would come, but since I couldn't give her an answer, I only said, "As soon as they can."

When in the spring of 1921 my grandfather Makar Timofyeyevich Gladky died during the famine, he was ninety-six years old. He had outlived the four Tzars, Alexander I, Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicolas II. Later, within the family his children used to say that their father probably would have lived even longer if their mother hadn't starved him to death because she was not sharing fairly with him the little food that they could find.

One day in March of 1921 I was scouting around the railroad station in Feodosia trying to find out how I could get on one of the freight trains. By chance I encountered a former stationmaster of Nikitovka, Marcely Tytovich Gasnyevsky. Before the Reds occupied the station of Nikitovka, he had evacuated with his family to Crimea by attaching his railroad freight car to the last train going south with the retreating troops of the White Army.

Since his arrival to Feodosia, he had been living in the same car on the remote and no longer used sidetracks of the station. When the Reds occupied the town, for a while he was paying the railroad workers to keep them quiet about his being there. He and his family stayed mostly inside and kept the car doors closed. They came out only to get water and his wife went at the market in town to barter some clothing for food.

When the CheKa agents began searching everywhere for the "enemies of the people," Gasnyevsky had no other choice but to move as quickly as possible back north and to try to disappear in one of the large cities where he hoped no one would know him. His destination was the city of Kharkov. Marcely Tytovich was a very good friend of my father with whom he worked for many years and he gladly offered to accommodate me in his freight car, almost as a member of his family, and told me to move in right away and to wait with them. I told my aunt "good-bye" and left my uncle's home.

Gasnyevsky was able to find some of his friends, railroad employees, who would arrange that his freight car would be attached to the freight train going north. Early in the morning the day of the departure the locomotive engineer checked with Marcely Tytovich to see if everybody was in the car and told him to be very quiet until the train departed from the station, no matter how long it took. Then he wished him good luck, closed the car door, locked it, and maneuvered the car on the sidetracks until he attached it at the very end of the freight train.

Before departure, we heard the voices of the men walking along the train and banging on the doors of cars as they came closer and closer. We all sat quiet without moving. Then we heard somebody come to our car and bang several times at the door. We all kept so quiet, that one could not even hear our breathing. At last we heard the whistle of a conductor and the train started to move slowly. When finally it was going at its full speed, everybody took a deep breath.

At the first unscheduled stop between the stations, the locomotive engineer came to open the car door and asked if everybody was all right. I saw Gasnyevsky give the engineer a handful of gold coins. The train stopped many times near the villages, giving time to the passengers for bartering clothing for food. During these stops I saw that, although officially it was a freight train, several cars full of passengers traveling north were attached at the end. When the train stopped at the stations, Marcely Tytovich would not get out of the car for fear of being recognized by railroad employees. He

would ask me to fill the buckets with water, or to buy a newspaper.

When the train reached the station of Losovaya, there the rail line from Crimea joined the Southern Railroad line that went directly to Nikitovka, it was time for me to say good-bye to the host family and head for home. However, on the advice of Marcely Titovich, I did not return directly to Nikitovka, where everyone knew that I had volunteered into the White Army. Instead, I deviated to a single-track railroad branch leading from Nikitovka to Papasnaya and farther north. I decided to stop at a small station, Belyayevka,<sup>3</sup> where my aunt Marusya, my father's sister, was living. Her husband, Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedev, had been a stationmaster there for many years. I hoped that they knew what was going on in Nikitovka. From there I could also communicate with my father through the railroad telegraph, or by sending him a message with some railroad conductor or locomotive engineer of a train passing through Belyayevka.

## Nikon Palich

Nikon Palich was a friend of mine – a close friend – very close. Well, you might call him a relation. My aunt on my father's side was married to him, so that made him a sort of uncle. I say "was" because he's dead, poor fellow. May his soul rest in heaven!

He was an important man in his village. He had two clerks and a porter under him. Everyone knew him well and respected him. In the old days in Russia, everyone knew the officials and respected them.

He was a stationmaster at a little railway station. There were two houses there. One was the station and the other was for Nikon Palich's staff, and there were a lot of sheds, too, because they all had cows and horses, pigs, geese, hens, ducks, and dogs, and ever so many cats. They lived pretty well. Pray God that the happiest Soviet citizens might live in such a way! Their working hours were wonderful. Twenty-four hours on duty and forty-eight hours off. That was, of course, for the stationmaster and his clerk. As for the porter, he worked only eight hours in every twenty-four. At nights, he was free to do just what he liked - no big meetings or little ones either - and no State loans, because under the old regime life was different. Everyone was so well off that they were not interested in discussions, and as for loans, well, they were your own private affair.

Uncle Nikon Palich lived just like a landowner. He loved fishing and shooting. There were no rivers in the neighborhood, but there were lakes on the landowner's estates full of carp, fat and lazy and very tasty, especially with sour cream. The landowners were very good-natured and invited him themselves. One of them would say, "Look, Nikon Palich, about those carp. One can't find a clear place to swim in this lake. It's the carp that do the bathing! It's no longer a lake, it's nothing but a fish soup."

And another would drop a hint about the hares. "What about that gun of yours, Nikon Palich. There it is lying idle, as neglected as an orphan. I can get you some small shot and powder from Kharkov. You'll get some pleasure, and a good dinner on top of that, and you'll be doing me a good turn, too. The hares did a lot of damage to the trees last winter." And he had many more invitations of that sort. That is how it was in those days.

But then came the Revolution and "Freedom"—well, that's what they call it, you know. But uncle found himself tied hand and foot. It was pretty risky to go fishing for carp, but to go shooting was frightfully dangerous. Nikon Palich dreamed only of the past. The present made him angry and he was worried about the future. If the Whites won, life would be good again, but if the Reds? He trembled with fright at the thought.

In 1920, it became clear that the Reds had the upper hand, but Nikon Palich went to work, spent his free time at home, and taught his sons to live as Christians. About six months of this twentieth year went by—half a year that is to say—when two vultures appeared from the Kharkov CheKa. They took uncle's gun and some leather for boots, two suit lengths, a bit of cash, a gold coin or two, and a few other items and off they went with uncle. Naturally, auntie cried with the children. I don't know whether uncle did. He certainly had every reason to, for it was no laughing matter for him.



After that, auntie and the boys made the journey to Kharkov to take food and other things to uncle, for they didn't know what food was given to prisoners, and it was more than likely one wouldn't get any there. Nikon Palich was imprisoned in a bare cellar. Of course, at that time Soviet power was only just beginning to get itself organized. So auntie made the journey and later the sons made the trip alone, but uncle, of course, had to stay where he was.

Time went on and then at last, after nine months, they let him go. They gave him back his leather and one piece of cloth. The other things, I suppose, were payment for his stay there. Nikon Palich did not protest. After all, he knew you never get anything without paying for it!

To make a long story short, he arrived home. Auntie was overjoyed, and the boys were happy, too. Auntie gave Nikon Palich a good bath, washed all his underclothes, got rid of a lot of unknown insects and looked after him just like you do when anyone has had a serious illness, and put him on his feet again.

After a month's recuperation, Nikon Palich went to Kharkov to find out what had happened to his work. But you can't do things like that in a hurry. The buildings were large, and several stories high. There were many corridors and numerous rooms, and the number of officials, you'd never believe. And they kept sending him first to one place and then to another.

He made the journey to Kharkov every day, except on Sunday because at that time, Sunday was still a day of rest. After three months of this, a kind-hearted person gave him some good advice, "Look, Nikon Palich, what you want to do is to go down to the lower floor, then up the steps and then go to the room on the right."

So uncle went to the room on the right and found an official sitting there who asked, "What do you want?"

Then Nikon Palich told him the whole story.

"What was your position?" asked the official.

"I was a station master," uncle replied.

Then this comrade official looked at some notes and said, "I have no record of you here, although I've been here four months. Your name is not on my list of station masters."

"Well, no, of course you wouldn't know about me, because I've been nine months at the Kharkov CheKa and a month recovering."

"And what were you doing there?"

"I beg your pardon, perhaps I have not made it clear. They kept me there nine months."

"What's that? In the CheKa did you say. Was it for some counter-revolutionary activities?"

"Oh no, nothing like that. I have documents to prove it."

"Give them to me."

Uncle handed them over and the comrade official read them:

"Nikon Palich is released from the CheKa without consequences."

Of course, the paper was all in order, signed and sealed, and dated.

"What does that mean 'without consequences?'"

"I don't know what these CheKa expressions mean, but I suppose it means no charge was made against me for anything."

"That may be so," replied the official very sternly. "But you spent nine months in some dirty cellar in the CheKa, and that's a stain on your character, and you cannot be allowed to continue working as a station master, so get out and don't come back here."

Nikon Palich went home and told all about his last interview, and auntie was very upset. "Is this what they call 'without consequences?'" she asked. "They stole your gold coins, and several other things they took, and now you aren't allowed to go back to work. Aren't those consequences?"

However, there was absolutely nothing they could do about it, so Nikon Palich found some rooms in a clergyman's house in a village about twenty miles from the station. Two rooms leading out of each other, and he moved there with all his family and what was left of his animals, a cow and ten hens. The others had already been eaten. Nikon Palich began to live like a villager. He had no hired man, so there was only auntie to take the milk and butter and eggs to the market at Kharkov. They made a little profit and what they spent, about equaled what they earned, so they managed to make ends meet, and they were not quite bankrupt yet.

About two months later, a whole commission turned up at Nikon Palich's lodging and marched straight into his rooms. They talked freely amongst themselves without paying the slightest attention to the owner. They admired one of the rooms, in fact, they appeared to take a lively interest in it. They took some measurements, discussed something and then the senior one, a commissar, or someone of that sort, announced, "You are to vacate this room immediately, citizen."

"What do you mean, vacate the room immediately?"

"I mean you are to liquidate your furniture, because this room is required for government purposes."

"What about us? .... We have no way out, if you take this room."

"What happens to you, is of no interest to us whatever, you can live in the other room if you wish."

Nothing could be done; they had to get out, because that's how "justice" operated in those days. A telephone exchange was installed in the confiscated room. The Reds had it all fixed up in a week, all correct according to the technical rules, only they nailed up the door leading to uncle's room.

Nikon Palich and his family, who now had no door to their room, sat and wondered. "How are we to get out of this room? There's no other door and we are forbidden to go through the one that's nailed up." Auntie thought with the boys. They simply had to get out to feed their cow and the hens and do all the other necessary jobs. And it was winter when all this happened; there was wood and straw that had to be fetched. The only escape seemed to be to fly out through the chimney. They didn't think long; they began to make use of the window to get out, because Archimedes himself couldn't have discovered another way out, and even if he had, he would most likely have found himself in the Kharkov CheKa, and spent nine months there "without consequences," or perhaps he would not have been released by the CheKa because by that time Soviet power had extended to all places in Russia.

Well, that's what happened. Nikon Palich lived for about half a year "without consequences" and he had no choice in the matter. He just had to use his window as a door.

## Lidka

Where did the lively demeanor, the cheerful talk of the traders and the merchants went? Where has the quick glance of the beautiful girls of the blessed South of Russia disappeared? Even in the market, where the passions of these lively people were expressed most vividly, no longer can be heard either shouts, disputes, or the brisk trade yell "it's a deal!" Everything has disappeared. People are moving like shadows. Some are skinny, with bright red lips, hollow cheeks, pointed noses, and rapacious eyes, which are starting to blur; the others are fat like carcasses, all swollen with shiny skin ready to burst at any moment.

People are moving slowly like shadows, sluggishly, without saying anything they whisper something or cry quietly. Some only move silently their lips...

Shadows are floating in the narrow and curved city streets with only one hope, with one desire... Often, out of strength, a wizened or large blurred shadow falls silently on a pavement or a sidewalk, never to get up again.

Oh! How many of those who got tired of fighting for their lives, fell in this devastated city! On the Italyanskaya and Karantinnaya Streets, on the Primorsky Boulevard, in the port, on the Ayvazovsky Square, by the rich dachas and poor cottages, along the railroad going to Sarygol and along the macadam road to Sary Krym!

Up there, on the Karantinnaya Street lives a small family.<sup>1</sup> It is still surviving. It is happy because the father is working and receives a ration. Not much, not much at all, but with the pharmaceutical precision in dividing, it is possible for them to survive during the famine.

Once the father returned home at an unusual time of the day, said something to the stepmother, and left. Strange people came late at night, rummaged the whole house, took some of the fathers' papers from his desk and left. The next day mobilized longshoremen came, pulled out the black shining grand piano, and all of the upholstered furniture, desk, and huge bookshelf and took it all... The apartment was left empty and dreary...

The father did not return. The children did not see him again. The stepmother was telling them that he went up North.

"He needs to be away..."

And how about bread? They survived for two weeks without bread. And then? Then, the stepmother said, "There is nothing left to eat, children. Get out to the streets and find it for yourself, like others do..."

*Lidochka*<sup>2</sup> was twelve years old and Boris was nine. In the morning both sister and brother walked out into a half-starved town, wandered the whole day, young and inexperienced, and return home being even hungrier. But their home was locked. The neighbors' houses were empty and scary. They went down to the center of town where the streets were illuminated with bright electric light at the railroad station. Tired, they accommodated near the sleeping children dressed in dirty, ragged clothes and probably as hungry as they were.

The coolness of the early morning and hunger woke them up. With dirty hands they rubbed their eyes. They met their night companions. And they became simply *Lidka*<sup>3</sup> and *Bor'ka*.<sup>4</sup>

They survived. They found young friends as well as some older and more experienced guardians.

Sometimes they remembered their father and stepmother. On those occasions they would go to Karantinnaya Street but their house was always locked and empty.

They survived through the whole summer. Somewhere they could find a thin slice from some plant, potato skin, wheat middling, or steal a potato in some place. In the seashore town it was possible in the summer to sleep under the old fisherman's boat and on the abandoned barge, but more likely under the tables at the market. However, in bad weather they slept in an old abandoned freight car.

Lidka met girlfriends. They brightened her days by listening to her young pain. They bestowed on her their almost motherly kindness. They had already seen life and understood everything better than the inexperienced Lidka.

The fall was nearing. It was becoming cold. Lidka's dirty lice infected ragged clothes were not keeping her skinny body warm. The girlfriends taught her how to stay warm with alcohol, wine or *samogon*, which ever they could "find"... It is warm and cheerful. It gave her courage. It was easier to steal. She felt more freely and nourished...

One day Bor'ka was sitting in the harbor. With hungry eyes he observed the longshoremen as they were loading the ship with wheat grain. In the evening he went to the old outrigger where he usually met his sister. He smelled *samogon*<sup>5</sup> from her breath.

"*Boryechka*,<sup>6</sup> I brought you something to eat. Look, Boryechka, it's real bread..." She fussed around her brother and hurriedly disentangled dirty rags where she was hiding a piece of bread.

"Lidka, it's cold... Do you feel how the wind blows? Where are we going to sleep tonight?"

"Eat, Boryechka, eat my little one, then I will put you to sleep and will warm you up..."

Boris avidily swallowed the bread; he was trembling from the cold and wet wind blowing from the sea and cried quietly. Lidka was bustling near him preparing a sleeping nest on the bottom of the old outrigger with the bundle of rags.

"Don't you worry, Boryechka," she told him in a grown-up manner, "everything will be all right. You eat first, then say your prayers to God, and then lie here in your small bed... I will tell you a fairy tale... Tonight you will be warm..."

"I want to go home, Lidka," Bor'ka whined.

"Well, my dear Boryechka, tonight we will sleep here, and tomorrow we will go home. All right?"

"Where is our papa now?"

"Papa had to go up North, my little one. He needed to do so. Stop crying... Remember that you are a man..."

"Why did he have to go?"

"You see, I think that they were looking for him here... Only you should remember not to tell this to anybody!"

"Why were they looking for him?"

"Probably because he was White, Boryechka. Here, I prepared the bed..."

"Are you going to sleep with me tonight?"

"I told you, my little one, that I am going to tell you a fairy tale..."

Boris was finishing the bread, trying not to drop a single crumb. He remembered the morning and how he observed the ship, how the longshoremen were loading the wheat grain and asked his sister, "Lidka, why are they loading the wheat to send it abroad and don't give it to us here?"

"What wheat?" Lidka asked surprised.

Boris told her about what he had seen.

"So tomorrow we will go to collect the spilled grain from the port grounds," she said.

"You think so! They have so many guards there! Even the longshoremen were thoroughly searched..."

"Well, Boryechka, I will go by myself and you will stay home."

"I am afraid, Lidka, they could kill you..."

"But, dear Boryechka, I am a woman... And for a woman it's easier... you know, all muzhiks are alike..."

Bor'ka didn't understand anything from her explanation, but it calmed him down. He believed that his sister was smarter than he was because she was older and she had attended school and knew how to read.

"Well, have you finished your supper? Now pray to God..."

"I don't know how to pray... I forgot how."

"I will prompt you," and Lidka remembered as her own mother had taught her to pray. "Stand on your knees and hold your little hands in front of you like this... And now repeat after me, 'Dear God, thank you for the bread... and water...'"

"Dear God..." Boris was repeating after her.

"Thank you for everything-everything... And for keeping us alive... Save all of us, hungry children... And our papa... And stepmother... And all good people... Good night, God!"

"Good night, God!" Bor'ka was repeating after her.

"Now cross yourself... Like that... And bow to the ground to God... Just like that... Now lie down... I will warm you up... You will feel good now. What kind of a fairy tale do you want to hear?"

"Tell me about the hungry boy who was drifting alone on the waves of the sea and how the magic boat brought him to the Nourishing Island. And how he was eating and drinking for three days and three nights..."

The children accommodated themselves at the bottom of the old outrigger. Lidka snuggled up her skinny body close to Bor'ka's. The smell of *samogon* was bothering him and he buried his face in his sister's bony chest. Lidka pulled some old rags over them and tried to tuck them under her brother's body. When both of them disappeared under the rags, the girl began to tell the fairy tale she had made-up. Boris felt the warmth of his sister's body and he slowly warmed up...

The next day, risking their lives, homeless children were making their way into the port to collect the precious wheat grains on the ground. The guards were not able to cope with the large number of children, who, like locust, were climbing through all the holes of the fenced port. Neither the shouting nor shooting in the air was able to stop their invasion. Only when the Red Army soldiers arrived, called in on emergency by the

Soviet export authorities, were they able to contain and force the children to retreat, who, in the eyes of the fat export agents, created a danger of delaying the schedule of the grain shipment abroad.

But the young “criminals” were happy and well fed for several days.

One day, the rain drizzled without interruption. On such days it was difficult to find something to eat. But Bor’ka was lucky. One passenger, getting out of the train, gave him a small package in which there was bread and a piece of salami. It was a rare thing to see. Boris avidly started to eat, but right away remembered about Lidka, and dividing it into two parts avidly swallowed up his part. All day he walked around the city trying to find his sister. The evening was nearing and he could not find her. His hunger didn’t allow Bor’ka to get food out of his childish mind, but he stubbornly held the wet package under his arm hoping to find his sister.

The cold of the nearing night was creeping under his ragged clothes. The drizzling rain did not stop piercing the air. On such nights he could not sleep in the outrigger. Boris climbed into one of the far-away freight cars, curled up in the corner squeezing the wet package with the sister’s half of the food fell asleep... and didn’t hear how the train brought him far away from his hometown...

Lidka and her girlfriends found an old abandoned cottage, full of holes and resembling a burrow, but nonetheless resembling to them human habitation, and they settled down there to wait till the winter was over. Lidka searched for Bor’ka and, not knowing what happened to him, cried for a while, especially when she was drunk. She thought all kinds of things but she did not know that Boris was rolling all around Russia in search for a piece of bread, warmth and some place to sleep...

It was a damp and dirty place, dark, like a wild beast’s den, but it did protect the homeless children from the rain and cold wind. Slowly it was filled up with their belongings, rags, cans, bottles, and some food, stolen or “earned.”

Every girl had her own place, where she kept her personal items, and nobody infringed on the other’s property even if it was a piece of bread hidden for a rainy day. It seems very strange, but this unbearable misfortune in which these homeless girls found themselves never provoked any discord among them about the most important thing, food. And if one of them came in the evening hungry and without a booty, all of them tried eagerly to share their meager supper with her. The wine and *samogon* warmed their small shivering bodies and put them in a cheerful mood, which sometimes became exuberant.

Their “guests,” whom they had met before in the dark corners of the town, were now coming here. They were also homeless older boys, or bums, but all of them paid their lover-girls either with a piece of bread, or other food, or with the large inflated money bills. It was not rare that some lovers would beat their girls. Then the pitch darkness of the den would resound with crying, sorrowful moans, and complaints of a young voices hoarse from alcohol and cold.

It was dreadful the life of these young beings, who were not women yet. After many days of thick darkness in Lidka’s gloomy life, a ray of light came out and brought her some joy. Here, in this poor and ugly cottage she encountered a man, who with his caresses and kind words awoke in her a beautiful feeling of love. She believed in his affection and gave him her young life unconditionally by leaving her girlfriends. It happened when she was not yet fifteen years old when she left her childhood behind

somewhere in the fog, and adulthood had not yet arrived.

The port wagoneer grew fond of her and took her to his house as his wife and mistress of the house. He was a coarse man, who liked to drink and he beat Lidka, but the rare occasions of tenderness warmed her poor little heart, which yearned for human affection, and she repaid him with her devotion and early feelings of an awakening womanhood.

Drinking and beating to within an inch of life alternated with the half-starving life in the were gone from her life. But the new days were not without sorrow. Since the uncertainty about the future remained, drinking and beating did not go away from her life completely... But now she lived in a house that she could call her home, which was clean and warm. Now there was a man to whom she, who so soon became a woman, could give all of her young and crippled life...

Not only sadness and sorrow fills the heart upon remembering the young girl Lidochka, whose life should have been flown on a completely different course, but deadly fear sizes only thinking that many millions of other young lives like Lidochka died, are dying now and will sacrifice their tender and fragile lives to the Red socialist deity.

## Mob Justice

I knew Mar'ya Nikolayevna Kuzenko for a long time.<sup>1</sup> She was a good friend of my mother and she had visited her very often. Mar'ya Nikolayevna used to be a plump woman with a very dignified appearance. She had a large face with rather rough features, but she had a charming deep-chested voice. And she impressed everybody mostly with a gentleness and sincerity of character. She was always favored by men who, without hiding their delight, liked to put their lips to her white plump hand in saluting her.

As a young woman she used to sing. Her contralto voice was very suitable to sing Gypsy romances and she received well-deserved applause from the public during concerts.

After her marriage, which was not very successful, she remained socially as she was before, a very pleasant lady, but she abandoned her singing and dedicated her life to the upbringing of her only son Vadim whom she called *Vadyk*,<sup>2</sup> who was a friend of my childhood and youth.

Mar'ya Nikolayevna's husband, Yelisyey Ivanovich Kuzenko, a railway official and a small auctioneer of coalmines, liked to play cards, women and good wine. It was hard to pinpoint which one of these three vices had priority in his life, but he was rarely home. If he was not busy with his duties on the railroad, he was either driving in his automobile to the mines to take care of his business matters, usually with his female companions, or indulging in drinking bouts also surrounded by the fancy women.

In 1919 Vadim and I went as volunteers in the White Army,<sup>3</sup> which was fighting against the Bolsheviks. In 1920 Vadim left from Sevastopol on the shores of Black Sea to the foreign lands,<sup>4</sup> while I, being surrounded by the enemy before the retreat of the White Army in Crimea,<sup>5</sup> had to remain in my Motherland.

When after two years of absence I finally returned home to Nikitovka, I found many changes there. Those changes also happened to Kuzenko family. Mar'ya Nikolayevna, though trying to maintain her previous dignity, had a face considerably pinched with a shadow of sadness and concern about her only son, from whom she had only a few lines now and then from Paris, France.

She often invited me to visit her and was able to listen for hours as I recounted about my and Vadim's life at the front. Surprisingly for me, I never found Yelisyey Ivanovich home, though his business matters should have been completely stopped, since the coalmines were taken by the Bolsheviks, and his drinking bouts ended, because it was hard to find even a bread on the market! And most of the members of the business society he dealt with had evacuated with the White Army and probably were already somewhere abroad.

For a while Yelisyey Ivanovich had kept his railroad employment because he had expertise in his field and was a valuable asset to the new railway administration. But he knew very well that, as soon as possible, he should move far from here where everybody knew him. He knew that his membership in a society of auctioneers and his son's



record as a volunteer in the White Army didn't give him a very good reputation in the eyes of the new Soviet workers-and-peasants authorities, and that one day he might disappear in the GPU cellars.

For this reason he secretly petitioned railway administration for a transfer to another railroad station. Finally his efforts paid off and he and his wife moved to Taganrog.

In 1929, completely unexpectedly, I had a visit from Yelisyey Ivanovich.

At the time of his visit he was returning home after being summoned to appear immediately before the GPU of Odessa to testify during the investigation of his son. It turned out that Vadim, with a small group of foolhardy fellows bought a motorboat in Bulgaria and set off in the Black Sea for the homeland. The border guard of the GPU caught them before they reached land, brought them to Odessa, and put them in the cellars of the city's GPU. The relatives of the *vosvrashchentsy*<sup>6</sup> were summoned and interrogated, but they were not allowed to see the prisoners.

Vadim and his audacious friends were held for several months in the GPU cellars. Then suddenly the authorities decided to send them back abroad. But before their departure, the GPU agents damaged the motor on their boat. Then they brought the prisoners to the open sea and left them during the night to their destiny, probably hoping that they would not survive. But the "humanitarian" deed of the Bolsheviks worked in favor of the young *vosvrashchentsy*. Vadim repaired the motor and they successfully reached the Bulgarian shores. From there Vadim had returned to Paris.

This incident in the life of the Kuzenko family could not pass by without tragic consequences. Yelisyey Ivanovich was not stupid, he understud that his career on the railway was over and that his days were running out. When he return home, he bought a small *dacha*<sup>7</sup> in the country and moved there with Mar'ya Nikolayevna. This was the last deed of taking care of his wife's welfare. Soon after his retur from Odessa, he was arrested an deported somewhere near the town of Tomsk<sup>8</sup> for three years of hard labor. However, Yelisyey Ivanovich had not survived the rigors of life in the Siberian concentration camp and in the second year he died.

For some time the whereabouts of Mar'ya Nikolayevna were not known to me. Occasionally I heard something about her life, from which I could mostly conclude that loneliness was becoming her destiny.

After the arrest of her husband, Mar'ya Nikolayevna remained not only in complete solitude, but also without means of subsistence. Because she belonged to the category of the "enemies of the people," it prevented her from finding work.

At first, she was selling her jewelry preserved almost by a miracle, and she lived off it for some time. Then she started to sell her old good quality furniture, then she took her husband's suits and her dresses to the market. And finally came a moment that there was nothing more she could sell.

Hard time came for Mar'ya Nikolayevna. But as it usually happens in so called hopeless situations, for her remained several solutions. More precisely, there were three possibilities: end her life by suicide, start begging, or survive by stealing. A tiny hope to see her son one day kept her from the idea of suicide. Then there were the other two solutions...

In the middle of the 1930's I received a letter from my cousin, who invited me to spend couple of weeks during the summer in his village. I was happy to accept his

invitation to have a rest in the tranquility of the village far from the noise and dust of the town, to breathe the fresh air, to sunbathe, to swim in the river, in one word, to enjoy all the charms of nature. During the school vacations I departed to visit my cousin.

Although my rest was sometimes interrupted by the need to provide for our daily bread, because we had to walk in town to buy the provisions, which was not possible to find in the collective farm village, I was able to find the time to walk, have a long lie in the green meadows, to fish, and to freshen up on the hot day in the cool waters of the river.

One day we went with my cousin in town where, as we heard the day before, they would be having in the store whatever they “dayut.”<sup>9</sup> We needed to arrive early in the morning at the hidden store to find a place in line as close as possible to the entrance door. It was almost five o’clock when we were nearing the town. I remembered, that somewhere here, on the outskirts of this town lived Mar’ya Nikolayevna Kuzenko, whom my cousin also knew.

“Evgeny,” I asked him, “do you know how is Mar’ya Nikolayevna? Do you see her some times? They say that Yelisyey Ivanovich has died in Siberia.”

“Yes,” replied my cousin, “she told me about it... But I really don’t know how she is living. We see each other very rarely... She is steering clear of all her acquaintances. You know, how the times are now – everybody is thinking only about himself...”

“Maybe also about the others?” I asked, “Maybe she does not want to encounter anybody, because her acquaintances could be suspected in being connected to the ‘enemies of the people’ and be also punished?”

“That’s possible, very possible,” he answered, “But I cannot tell you anything about her life...”

At that moment we were entering in the first street of the town. We were surprised to hear so early in the morning the loud and exciting screams of a crowd slowly walking toward us in the middle of a dusty street. As they came closer to us, we could see better what was going on and hear the sharp and gross expressions coming from the procession and we began to understand the horrible scene of the street tragedy, which was opening before our eyes.

Up front walked several men and women who were holding firmly the naked arms of an elderly looking woman who already had signs of being tattered by the crowd. Her long hair was disheveled, clothes were torn, and her bosom was naked. Wide-open eyes were looking with terror somewhere ahead and her face was wet with tears. Both face and breasts were blue from the received blows and in some places the blood was dripping from the wounds and falling down on the remnants of her clothes and on the soft dusty road.

The people who were holding her were pulling with such a force that it seemed they wanted to tear her body into pieces. Those who were behind pulled her hair and banged on her back and head with sticks. The unfortunate woman looked as if she was losing her consciousness, and she dropped her head on the chest. Her legs were giving way under her but she couldn’t fall, because those who were holding her were pulling her by the arms even harder.

Occasionally some men and women would jump out of the crowd in front of the woman, make faces and spit at her, or strike her in the face, pinch her breasts. Some women dared to pull their skirts up and show her their naked behinds. From the crowd

came infuriated screams, "Thief! ...Thief! ...Thief!" Vile abuse and bad language from the men and women were accompanied by their wild jumping up and down.

The horror-stricken woman's eyes filled with tears; she could not even see the road beneath her and she was groaning, "O-o-kh!.. O-o-kh!...O-o-kh!...Forgive me...forgive me, good people!...O-o-kh!..."

The deep pectoral voice seemed to me familiar and I asked the cousin to walk faster.

Suddenly, one elderly man jumped out from the crowd, grabbed a broken large metal pot lying on one side of the street, and pushed it on the head of the unfortunate woman. The crowd went into a rage; it hooted and whistled and roared with laughter. Somebody from behind hit the pot with a heavy stick. The victim vacillated and started slowly to descend to the ground. Those who were holding her let her go and her body fell heavily on the dusty road. The crowd stopped and stood still and silent for a while, then quickly melted away in the narrow side streets.

When we came closer to the victim, my cousin exclaimed: "Look, it is Mar'ya Nikolayevna!"

Yes, it was she. On her chest, by miracle preserved, was big medallion, which I knew from my childhood. It was open. Miniature photograph of Vadim, my friend of childhood and youth was looking at me...

The disfigured woman was lying with the face covered with dust. On her neck was tied the "material evidence" of her crime: women's underwear, bras, panties, stockings...

"Poor woman!" sadly said my cousin.

"Poor Mar'ya Nikolayevna..." I repeated with sorrow, "What a tragic way to die..."

And we hurriedly walked in the nearest side street, so we would not be involved in this tragic story of the triumph of the mob justice when the GPU arrives.

## Successful Escape

A passenger train sped south. It was packed inside and outside with people. They clung to the exterior of the cars, to the footsteps, buffers, and the passageways between the cars. The train crew was helpless to stop it. The conductors were only locking the car doors and checking them often. The armed guards that accompanied all trains were only seen during arrival and departure from the larger train stations where the units of CheKa,<sup>1</sup> its so-called “anti-profiteer detachments,” were located. Most passengers knew all the written and unwritten railroad laws and used all their ingenuity not to fall into the hands of the authorities.

After many kilometers of railroad that passed through growths of trees and shrubs, road intersections, plate layer’s cabins and small stations where no stops were made, the train entered an open area. Additional tracks appeared on both sides running far ahead towards the same point. The train was approaching a large junction station where the “anti-profiteer detachment” would be located. Such units had the responsibility of fighting with the “speculators” but, in fact, they were detaining all “suspicious” individuals, those without documents, plus the so-called “counter-revolutionary.” Not surprisingly, people were preparing to escape.

As soon as the train began to slow down those riding on the exterior of the cars started to jump off. Only the brave ones were trying to delay the decisive moment so they could get closer to the station.

People were falling down from the steps, sinking deep into the embankment, but getting up right away and running down. Jumping over a deep trench, they kept running towards the closest grove of trees. Rifle shots were heard from behind and bullets were buzzing over their heads.

Separating from the larger group that was trying to hide in the green of the trees, two running passengers veered to the side and, finding themselves on a road, slowed down to a fast walk trying to catch their breath.

“Lucky,” said one.

“Obviously, the detachment is somewhere near by,” replied the other.

“When is this going to end?” asked the first one.

“What? The anti-profiteer detachments?” asked the other.

“Yeah, the detachments...”

Bullets whined over their heads, reminding them of the danger.

“These are not from the train... We better hurry, before it is too late...” said the older one and both went faster.

The shots continued to be heard. Unorganized fire was spattering the grove of trees that was descending into a deep ravine and disappearing there.

It was an early summer morning. The rolling steppe was covered with green grass. Soft road dust, damp with morning dew, was rising lazily behind their feet and as slowly descending back on the gray road.

The blue sky astonished with its clarity and depth, and the bright sphere of sun,

unusually, seemed more silvery than golden.

The travelers walked fast, following the road. Ever since the bullets flew over their heads they held silent. Each was thinking about something of his own, got into his own world, blind to his surroundings.

The railroad station was left far on one side when both strangers stopped. The road at this point seemed to end abruptly, steeply dropping down. In front of them opened the panorama of a very large village with houses scattered around in picturesque irregularity.

"Russia!" enthusiastically exclaimed the younger traveler.

"Have you forgotten the shooting?" asked the older man, "You probably didn't dream about Russia then?"

"All of this is just temporary. It'll change..."

"God willing!" replied the older man with a sigh and then asked, "Are you in a hurry to get somewhere?"

"Me?.. What you want me to tell?.."

"Well, you should tell what you think... I am not from those rotters hunting for human souls," said the older. The kind look of the older traveler won over. He looked open and friendly.

The younger man didn't want to lie, "I just need to let the time to pass till is over..."

"Hey! It turns out that we are in the same boat! I am also traveling to kill time... I can't go to my native place or to settle anywhere—it's hard and still dangerous—so I am traveling from the North to the South so that later I can go from the South to the North..."

"So how are you with the food... sleep... money?.." the young man bombarded him with questions.

"I can see you don't have much experience?"

"Well, what I can tell you?.. I've been traveling for a long time.. But I am curious how others manage, in this case, you... I mean, one can't get lucky every time?"

"In some places you don't get lucky, true, but that's life!"

"The same happens to me!"

"Do you know this village?" asked the older man.

"No, I have never been here..."

"Let's hope they will feed us here well!" said the older man and both went down the road.

From the higher end the village gradually slopped down in some places, then suddenly stopped at a shining line of a river far away. Across the river, the left bank was very low and had tall meadow grass, which from far away looked very dense and lush.

The travelers approached the outskirts of the village. The cottages had vibrant white walls and bright zavalinkas<sup>2</sup> and shutters. The whiteness of the walls and diversity of colors made the little peasant houses seem gay and friendly—the travelers bravely approached wattled and stone fences behind which the large dogs began to bark. From somewhere, the owners were appearing, slowly approaching the fences, looking attentively into the unwashed faces, discreetly responding to greetings and hesitantly carrying on conversations, but nonetheless bringing out good slices of peasant bread, a tureen of milk or some other simple peasant food.

After several successful peasant houses, the young man stopped and said,

"That's enough... I think I have eaten enough for the whole day!..."

"We should take something for the road—beg for at least a piece of bread."

At the next house they were given a slice for reserve.

"Well, we can rest now! This should be a great day!.. We will get some sleep in the fresh air after a sleepless night! Let's go that way..." the older man pointed away from the village and both moved in that direction.

"I've been through here before... This area is very familiar to me. Hunting here is wonderful... The animals walk right in front of your gun. Rabbits – as many as your heart desires," continued the older man. "And, by the way, what is your name?"

"Call me Yura..."

"They called me Vasil Vasilich some time ago..."

"And they don't call you that any more?" asked with a smile the young one, whose name truly was Yura.

"E-e eh! Now! Some call me Vas'ka, some Vasil, and some simply Vasilich, sometimes without a name at all... I've been running for a long time... Years... From the beginning of the Revolution... And one cannot find a peaceful life anywhere."

"You are not the only one running... All of Russia is on its feet..."

"I know that Russia is all on its feet. I am not trying to complain about my fate. We are all equal now. The rich and the poor."

"At least you have lived in a normal world, but us, the young, maybe we will see something in the future, but for now for us is the same running from everything just like for you, the old men..."

"Old man?!" exploded Vasil Vasilich "Do you think that I am old man? E-e-eh, my dear fellow! I still can argue with the young ones. Don't you offend me, please... If I felt as an old man, I would've stopped running from the inevitable a long time ago! I am still young! The gray hair is not from the age, it is from what I had to live through... The whole war I was in the forward positions on the battlefield. That was not playing with toys! I was risking my life every day, my friend! You didn't happen to see such things yet, this was not your destiny; and I don't wish you'd ever have to..."

"I also saw something in my days and was in combat too!" countered Yuri.

"Were you... in the Voluntary army?" asked Vasil Vasilich, for some reason whispering.

"Yes."

"That means we are twin brothers in misfortune. Can one say that you have baptized your youth by fire?"

"Not my youth, it's more like childhood..." sadly said Yuri.

"I am not asking you for any details... It's not worth it to torment the past... Let's better distract ourselves from that all... It's painful to remember for me, too..."

The travelers were coming down towards the river. Now they walked silently, not wanting to talk about what really was too painful.

"Well, right here we shall have a rest!" finally said Vasil Vasilich and fell down on the soft grass still damp from the early dew.

Yuri took off his warm jacket, lined with quilted cotton, in which he traveled even during the summer, placed it on the grass near Vasil, and lay down.

Only now did Vasil Vasilich notice that Yuri's jacket was altered from a gymnasium uniform and for that reason asked, "Have you attended gymnasium?"

"Some time ago, yes, I have."

Both went silent. Now the morning yielded them a pleasant feeling. Maybe the natural quietness of nature gave rise to such feeling, or maybe it was just because they had survived the stress of running from the rifle fire.

After a short silence, Yuri raised himself a little because he noticed an old cross covered with moss, "What is it, did we happen to escape into a cemetery, Vasil Vasilich?"

"You mean about the cross?"

"Yes, it is not the most pleasant place to be... Especially for a rest..."

"It seems to me that not too long ago you and I got away from death?"

"From death? Those idiots were shooting at the wind!"

"Do you know that the brave in most cases die from the stray bullets?"

"I know, but we turned out to be far from being brave... We ran, like rabbits..."

"Why would we want to fall into 'their' hands? We still might be needed... Anything is possible..."

"Well, by the way, if you want to rest your soul a little longer, I'll tell you a legend that would probably be forgotten soon... See how our life is going... History will soon be forgotten, not just the legends. Pay attention to this grave. See how well it is taken care of?"

"Yes, someone obviously is taking care of it..."

"This grave is about a hundred years old. And, as you can see, people are not forgetting it..."

Vasil Vasilich accommodated himself more comfortably lying on his back and began telling the story that no one wrote down.

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There on the top, on the very edge of the village, could be seen a house with a bright green roof. It is not just a common cottage, as the peasants have here, but a full size house as you are used seeing in a any city. It stands high up but it has clean and fresh water, or some time ago had—I don't know about now... So, in this big house lived long time ago Pan Khmelevsky. He was a tall, old gentleman with a biblical long, white beard. No one here knew of his past. No one even noticed when he moved to this village. People always thought that Pan Khmelevsky grew up there or lived there form the beginning of time. Actually, as you should know well yourself, in those days no one even bothered with such questions. Lives the person there, doesn't bother anybody, well, let him live to his heart's content.

Pan Khmelevsky had two daughters—real beauties. He himself was obviously a devoted Catholic. He lived a secluded life—no one visited him and no one, of course, could tell how he lived. The peasants only knew that Pan Khmelevsky was rich and, according to their imagination, famous. But they also described him as being a big eccentric.

It is unclear whether or not he was rich, but in any case he had the means, otherwise he would have not been able to build such a house.

Obviously, Pan was not only rich, not only famous, but also very smart. In any case, he knew the business of life very well... and in the evening the beautiful and magical sounds of music were resounding far, far away. The peasants often gathered

not too far from the Pan's house to listen to the "city music."

From the time when from his house began to sound the harmonious music, the life of one peasant boy changed completely—his parents asked Pan to teach their son. Pan took the boy for a complete upbringing. Under his patronage the boy flourished into a musical talent, but.... the music also brought the genius to madness.

The legend tells that here are buried Pan Khmelevsky, his daughters, and the genius musician. Their graves are not forgotten. Someone continues to take care of the strangers' graves. Maybe the legend motivated peasants toward this, maybe the loneliness of strange people touched them; but as you can see, the graves have now the fresh flowers and a wreath. Only the cross is old... But I believe the time will come when that "someone," who took care until now, will change the cross as well on these seemingly forgotten graves.

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"So why did he go mad?" asked Yuri.

"What you are asking me are the details of something that happened a hundred years ago," said Vasil Vasilich, "You better tell me, what you want to do next? Time goes by fast and we need to make a decision."

"I have nowhere to rush anymore, I have no one to love! And I think we will all go mad soon. Only not from music..."

"You don't say! You think that the music of our days is much different from the cacophony of the mad musician buried here?"

The travelers lay quietly in the thick grass for a little while, then slowly got up and silently started walking towards the railroad station.

The day was coming to an end. Soft road. Dust. Warm air. And the graves left behind with someone still carefully taking care of them...



## The May Day

So the revolution happened. And do you know what the revolution means? Certainly not! How could you know such things being from the “rotten West.”<sup>1</sup> But I can explain it to you. It is freedom. And do you know what freedom is? It means that you want to swim on Earth like a fish in the water. Can you live this way? Good. Then swim. But what I have to do with it? What have tens, hundreds, thousands, and finally, millions of people to do with it? And there are different people! There are soldiers, sailors, who don’t want to fight, they want only to take advantage of freedom. And then there are simply boys and girls not grown up yet. Aren’t they human too? Why should they die because of your freedom?

We have waited so long for her – the so-called freedom. At last it came. We met “Her.” And, you know, experience is really important. You should remember how the Tsar was “oppressing” us? Was it tough? Very tough. Well, and now this Wench Freedom<sup>2</sup> settled herself on our shoulders – that’s freedom and how!.. Is it easy now?..

Not likely! Do what you want! Want to fight – go, we are not stopping you; don’t want – warm yourself at your own oven – you should understand, comrade, it’s freedom! The Tsar exists no more! No oppression of any kind!

But Vaska Rekhov<sup>3</sup> prompts a hint: “There is no God either, He does not exist! It is all nature!”—What a smart fellow is this Vaska!..

And do you know who is this Vaska Rekhov? You don’t? He is a drunk, ugly mug marred by knife scars, with the crab-like eyes, and with syphilis, of course. Scientific atheism at its best, so to say. In addition, a walking example of it.

Well, let’s assume there is no God, but it turned out that there is Jehovah. It is crawling around the settlement. Because the orthodox temple was surrounded with obscenity by the Christians themselves, those who had been carried away by freedom, but the synagogue – stood without any guard and without being cursed. Do you understand that? It is not a fairy tale, it was real. It did happen.

But he, this Vasiliy – with that vixen, the so-called Wench Freedom, who in February<sup>4</sup> climbed on the pedestal together with the clerks and salesmen<sup>5</sup> – all be damned! “Get lost, you, Kerensky’s bitch, go to the Kuzkin’s mother!” All are pushing the massive Wench Freedom – the working people freedom! The proletarian freedom! Well, and with Her there is a knight, comrade Felix (Dzerzhinsky).<sup>6</sup> They cannot do without him. Because people infringe... Upon what? Upon this monster freedom, upon that vixen of Vaska Rekhov, which he himself on his own will had installed on that pedestal. Who infringes upon it?..

I am in my sixties, but still remember as if it had happened only yesterday.

It was in May. They called it – the “May Day”. “Internationale” sounds everywhere. Columns marching. Red rags flying. Menacing slogans. And I was ordered by the *chekist*<sup>7</sup> Maltsev to come to his office at the railway station. Of course, I obeyed. One could not refuse. After all, it’s freedom. He interrogated me, because I infringed upon...

“Sign it!”

I wanted to read his illiterate scribbles (I wonder how they could make out what was written – upon what I infringed) I wanted to understand all that slime.

“Now, what you want! Sign it! And go right away to comrade Tupitsa (it means Blockhead).”

He was a bit higher than Maltsev. Double blockhead – by his family name and by his brain.

Meanwhile express train, Moscow – Mineralnye Vody, arrived. Someone was picked from the train, like a coat from the hanger. They led him to the office. The whole ORTCheKa<sup>8</sup> was anxious. And the criminal resembled a ragged vagabond with the face of an intelligent person and a look of a beast at bay. He caused all that storm in a glass of dirty water!. Probably he also infringed upon something...

“Go!” Maltsev ordered (he believed I would not escape) and he hurried to help comrade Tupitsa.

Well, comrade Tupitsa was famous along railroad line, oh, how far away! Because he had only one resolution: “Send him to the headquarters to Dukhonin!” And right away, while the person was still alive, the report was written: “Killed in an attempt to escape the proletarian justice...”

What a rant! Right?

Well, of course, they could have done it without writing such a report, but have simply to add one more check mark in the proletarian statistics for the chekist’s secret files and to notify their chiefs. But then the most important matter would have been lost – the office bureaucracy, the stamp, the obligatory seal, and, of course, the signature: “Tupitsa” (“Blockhead”). What do you think it is? It is nothing to sneeze at.

The express train left. And from the South park was moving up North to Moscow a convoy of coal (note, not just a simple train!). On the buffers – armed guards, of course, in case of infringement... And who would think – the soldier-guard allowed me into the cabin of an Austrian freight car!

“Keep inside only! So that they don’t catch a look of you at the station!”

While the train moved along the station, I peered through the crack: Comrade Tupitsa was standing in his leather cap, leather jacket, leather riding breeches, and leather boots and watching with his unseeing eyes our convoy: “Is there any counterrevolutionary on the run here?”

From the distance “Internationale” was heard. Somewhere behind the houses the red rags fluttered in the breeze.

It happened at the time, when they were beginning to build the new better world. Do you remember?.. Then people infringed...

Now they finish building it. More subtly... Because people still infringe...

## Uncle Evlampy

My Uncle Evlampy was to some degree a cultured man, one can say that he graduated from the Institute of the Eastern Languages in Tomsk. Of course, before the revolution, under, so to speak, the old regime. He learned there the eastern language, the Chinese. But for some reason also English. They say, that he learned it discretely well. He even got a diploma. He spoke Chinese well enough to pass muster, was able to read their Chinese grammar and even learned to write. The same in English. Of course, I am not a specialist, and cannot tell which grammar is more difficult, Chinese or English, and if God would grant us to see each other, I for sure would ask my uncle which grammar is more difficult, Chinese or English and where there are more difficulties. However, we should not get so much interested with the foreign languages

Have finished so quickly with the Institute, my uncle departed for the advanced training in foreign languages, first in England, then in China. Of course, he perfected himself. After that he arrived, better to say, he returned to his homeland, (we have to note, that before no-one was afraid to return to their homeland, and they were coming completely voluntarily) and he received from the fathr-tsar (I cannot remember if personally from him or from his ministers) the assignment to prosecute the *khunkhuses* on the East-China railroad. When comrade Stalin got to power, he contrived to sell this railroad to "sell" to the Japonese, and consequently, when the American allies have dropped the atom bomb, he took it back from the belligerent nation.

*Khunkhuses* in Chinese means simply the robbers. They were attacking this Tsasr's East-China railroad. Of course, they robbed and even killed the peaceful travelers. In his letters my uncle wrote, of course in Russian, that sometimes he had to sign also the death sentences. What one can say, he had job of very great responsibility. Now, try to exchange the human life, even the one of the robber, with the noose? It is now, when in the "most democratic" country in the world to kill the person is almost like to spit, the most happy soviet mankind does not pay any attention to it. Even more, it salutes the genius-leader in this deadly matter, because the last wars, revolution and the following "peaceful happy and prosperous life" have hardened its hart. And, as a matter of fact, is afraid even to sigh about the perished soul of some kind of "enemy of the people."

To say it short, my uncle served the Tsar faithfully and loyally up to the time of revolution. But after that, when some darkness and discord did not allowed to send mail regularly, did happen, one can say, definite and considerable interval in our correspondence. I keep silent, and my uncle sat mum, as if he does not exist on this earth.

Sometimes I thought, maybe my uncle had sneaked from the soviets somewhere to China or England on account of some service related business. But I am afraid to even think about it. I am forcefully stopping any thought in this direction. And to talk about it, you understand, great-grandfather of today's MGB, comrade CheKa, was asking to answer for such even very distant relatives being abroad. And what I could tell them

about my own uncle, if I saw him last time during the Japanese war, when I was about five or six-years old. Well, maybe five-and half.

But as far as the correspondence, I should admit, I took care ahead of time – I have burned at night everything and dispersed the ashes in the wind, so the eye of the stranger would not get interested in the secret procedure. And all photographs, and, of course, postcards with the Chinese exotic pictures I committed to the flames, burned, so to say, with the roots any ties to the foreign countries. Not that I was sleeping peacefully, but the sin was somewhat farther. There were no material evidence.

However, at the end of the twenties my uncle Evlampy suddenly appeared on the Far East. I felt disappointment in my soul. I thought, educated, has a diploma, speaks English and Chinese, but he returned to homeland from Kharbin, where was residing. Made a mistake my uncle, I thought. And I was afraid to receive his letters. But send him standard reply: "I am alive, in good health and wish the same to you." I prepared a dozen of cards ahead – need only to put the date and – mail it.

One day, on the occasion of being deprived of the voting rights I remained jobless. Not remained, but to say it simply, they gave me the chuck. I kept quiet and waited—any moment they would grab me, pull out my soul and good-by life forever. Of course, no one wants to leave the wide world, especially under such circumstances—like if they kill you as a scabby dog. It is different, if one perishes in a battle. But like that, defenceless – it is boring and in general very unpleasant. But this time the letter saved me. My uncle wrote: "Come here, my dearest, life here is no picnic, but one can exist and people exist here." So, I sold all I could not take with me, my friends (I had them, in spite to the "leader") helped me to remove myself from all the registers, therefore, I could breathe with relief and departed.

I sat in the train and thought, "Thank God, once more everything ended well. Only it's nauseating—all the time running for dear life. The past as a shadow runs after you, and at night one cannot hide, because it is all dark.

The Ural Mountains flashed by. I made a deep sigh with relief—for sure, they don't catch me—Siberia is spacious. But it was good that I stopped at aunty Anastasia that lived in Novosibirsk. As soon as I arrived at the steps of the home, she handed me a telegram: "Wait for the letter."

Shortly after, the mailman with the letter. Uncle's wife writes straight-forward in plain words: "One night comrades *Gepeushniki*<sup>2</sup> came into our home and grabbed your uncle. Stay put and don't try to come to Vladivostok. I am uncertain myself about my future." Well, I was not moving, waiting for further instructions. Then I had no place to go. Seven or eight months passed—second letter arrived: "Your Uncle Evlampy received ten years of hard labor."

Well, here one has to ponder. Whatever for my Uncle received such, as they say, high award from the proletarian government? I am at my wit's end. Maybe, he robbed someone?..But he incapable of doing that. And then, ten years for the robbery? It is impossible! As a matter of fact, if they catch the thieves, they get them in one militia door and let them out in the other. And generally speaking, they try not to catch them. They leave them free for the delight and amusement of the bored public.

The time was going by, and I was sitting at the shores of River Ob and waiting for the results. Well, I finally got them. Another letter arrived: "Uncle had been deported to Solovky.<sup>3</sup> Is he resting there or recovering, I don't know exactly." There was no need to

wait further.

It is well known about those white-guards Solovki. Although my Uncle did not serve in the White Army. But maybe? Everybody knows what kind of correspondence was during that sedition time. In one word, they hid the person.

Well, in those days Solovky was known as a place where all Whites were deported. And there were stories going around about that place... They were saying that even the climate there was *byelogvardyeisky*<sup>4</sup> – white-guards, and the sea was also called White. And, believe it or not, even the animals were showing their White political convictions, having only white fur—white bears, white rabbits, and white foxes, and some were saying that even the birds had white feathers! It looked like the entire region was populated with the counterrevolutionaries. Only the guards were Red and that was to prevent the birds, animals, and deported humans from organizing their own independent White state.

I sat little bit longer on the steep bank of the River Ob. It is human to keep hoping. I was thinking, maybe there was some mistake, or maybe Uncle could escape. I didn't had the time to think that, as I received one more letter in which my uncle's wife wrote that uncle was transferred to the place called Medvezh'ya Gora, that's on the hard land of the Siberian continent. But the most important news was that he was given a promotion—they appointed him a Lyekpom,<sup>5</sup> as they were calling a medical assistant. To heal the enemies of the people.

I started to reason, "Medical Assistant? How could it be? I know very well that Uncle Evlampy never had any medical diploma or any kind of training. At the Institute of Eastern Languages they did not even study human anatomy."

And I became full of admiration—how talented my uncle Evlampy is. He knows how to play violin and piano; he knows how to sculpt; he can paint beautiful landscapes with oil or watercolor; he wrote and illustrated a booklet about Chinese art, and another about Chinese music; he learned the ancient and modern languages—he has excellent knowledge of English and Chinese and, of course, of his own Russian and Ukrainian. And now it looks like he has suddenly acquired the medical knowledge! God willing, after his ten-year sentence is over, he will be a professor of medicine! You know, ten years is a long term to study a new profession.

Then I thought, "Of course, it shouldn't be too difficult to give medical treatment to the "enemies of the people." What could it involve? Maybe the guards beat somebody hard to either break one's legs, or arms, or spine, or to disfigure... Well that's nothing, it could not even be called an illness..."

Still I was thinking where he got his medical diploma. Maybe in England? It is a civilized country and, in general, they have the Oxford and Cambridge Universities.. And what is China? Backward, one could call it, eastern country...

But still, why they sentenced my Uncle for ten years? It must be for the comrades *khunkhuses*, because they were fighting for the Lenin's-Stalin's right cause – for the world revolution. They were blood brothers to the wise leader himself. Djughashvili robbed the Tsar's post office and the *khunkhuses* the Tsar's railroad—the same, to say, profession, and in general kindred souls...

After some more reasoning about my uncle, I came to a more optimistic conclusion, "Thank God, after all, he is alive, they didn't shoot him. And he is healing the "enemies of the people." And what's more, he provides a helpful hand for the well-being

of the unfortunate people, alleviates their suffering, and washes their wounds. One can say that he carries out in every-day life the teachings of Christ...”

## In the Waiting Room

On my journey home from Novosibirsk after my unsuccessful attempt to join my uncle Pavel in Vladivostok, I had to wait overnight for a connecting train at one large railroad station. At about ten o'clock that night all the main line trains had passed through and the station was filled with passengers waiting for connections to the branch lines trains. Unfortunately, most of these did not leave till the next morning, so the people already fatigued by a long journey had no other choice but to spend the night in the stuffy railroad station's waiting rooms, sitting wherever they could find a place on hard wooden benches and in uncomfortable positions.

They all hurried to the first or second-class waiting rooms to secure the most comfortable seats. However, after one hour the cleaners arrived to clean the rooms and asked passengers to leave. So they gathered up their belongings and went, grumbling and unwilling, out onto the platform, but there they were also told, "Pass along to the third class waiting room. No one is allowed to remain on the platform."

The enormous third class waiting room was already full of people sleeping or dozing. The noise of the newcomers woke some, but they did not alter their positions. The upper classes passengers examined the room carefully to find somewhere to sit down, but all the benches were already occupied. Maybe a few managed to squeeze here and there into a small space but the remainder, including me, had to sit on the floor on their luggage. And those who had no luggage to sit on had only a few choices, either to find a spot and sit on the stone floor, or walk up and down all night along the narrow passage between the sleeping people, threading between their arms and legs, or to lean up somewhere against the wall and stand there till morning. But those who at first decided to walk or stand, changed their minds very soon and one by one settled on the floor.

After midnight the room grew quiet. Hanging from the ceiling like some great monster was a huge dirty chandelier covered with cobwebs. Its lamps were extinguished. The light coming from the two small electric lanterns over the empty buffet threw distorted shadows of the chandelier on the ceiling and down the opposite wall. Moths fluttered around the lights and silly flies and maybugs buzzed against the glass. The walls were smoke-soiled and looked almost black giving the whole place a gloomy appearance.

The air was foul and the sound of heavy breathing by several hundred sleeping people was oppressive. In this comfortless place to sleep, one could at times hear a baby crying, or someone groaning, or coughing, or sighing deeply. There was nobody walking in the room. It appeared haunted and depressed, as if the people, driven there by some compulsion and lacking the strength to resist, were subject to a harsh domination by some unseen evil spirit from which there was no escape!

At about two o'clock at night, the light bulbs of the chandelier were lighted. Someone who was aware of the significance of this ill-omened illumination, cautiously opened his eyes and nudged his neighbor as if by accident. In a few moments, this

watchfulness was communicated to the whole room. The man lying on the floor next to me pushed with his elbow in my back and I gave a few tugs to my neighbor's coat sleeve. Most kept their eyes shut, but there was a feeling of uneasiness and people were just pretending to sleep expecting something to happen. The heavy breathing and coughing stopped and a strange silence embraced the whole room. All were waiting...

The creaking of the door hinges broke this silence and through barely opened eyelids I could see that a man had entered. He was of medium height, strong, muscular, and clean-shaven. Although it was summer, he wore a long great coat and a peaked service cap with the red band around it. Through my semi-closed eyes I saw the familiar uniform and it flashed in my mind, "A GPU agent!" And I continued to watch him.

He began to walk slowly between the sleeping people staring intently at their faces. Sometimes he stopped and slowly looked around. Under his searching gaze, the inexperienced passenger began to cringe away. The GPU agent looked at him a little longer, then abruptly turned and stared with the same sharp eye at the person next to him. If his searching scrutiny didn't reveal anything in the face of this unfortunate passenger, he moved on, treading noiselessly in his soft boots and glancing ahead. Now and then, he stopped and examined with the same attention the passengers who were keeping their eyes shut; then again he moved forward, threading his way through the people lying on the floor.

Suddenly he stopped not far from the buffet and fixed his eyes on a passenger who was asleep on a bench near there. It appeared that this man was so sound asleep that neither the glare from the unexpectedly lighted chandelier, nor the uneasiness of the rest of the people had disturbed him, but those sitting close to him could feel how irregular his breathing has become, and how shudders ran through his body. For a few minutes the GPU agent studied this passenger attentively and then touching him on the arm, said very quietly but firmly, "Come with me."

The passenger continued pretending to be asleep, trying to put off the fatal moment, but, feeling a painful grip on his arm, he yawned, opened his eyes. "Follow me," said the GPU agent quietly as before.

The passenger jumped up, red spots appeared on his pallid cheeks. He tried to look as if he did not understand what was happening and asked, "What is the matter?"

The GPU agent repeated, "Follow me."

The passenger dropped his head in resignation and with a feverish look followed the GPU agent toward the exit door.

They had scarcely left the room when the seemingly sleeping people woke up, and began to stir. They opened their eyes, turned towards their neighbors, made some remarks in a low voice, and the same words could be heard on all sides, "They've taken him away!"

In a few minutes the GPU agent returned to the waiting room. The passengers again pretended to be asleep, though now not all of them could conceal their agitation, and the GPU agent had no difficulty seeing through their apparent sleep. But it was obvious that he knew perfectly well from experience that there were probably no politically dangerous suspects among these trembling people, who so obviously were pretending to be asleep. The "enemies of the Soviet state" were to be found amongst those who appeared to be sleeping peacefully and innocently. Looking contemptuously at the cowardly ones, he allowed his eyes to travel slowly from face to face, till they



again rested on the peacefully “sleeping” passenger. Once again, laying his hand on the arm of the victim he said, “Follow me.”

The passenger opened his eyes. He appeared to be calm. He even looked with an air of surprise at the man in uniform, who repeated his order.

“What do you want? Here are my documents. You can examine them here.”

But the agent insisted, “Follow me. We will check your documents there.”

“Very well, I will come,” declared the passenger, with a rather threatening look and walked swiftly towards the exit; the GPU agent followed him closely. Just before he reached the door, the passenger suddenly turned around towards the agent and punched him in the face with such force that the agent fell on the floor. The passenger rushed through the door and disappeared into the darkness on the barely illuminated platform.

The room was struck dumb with terror. The GPU agent remained for a few seconds on the stone floor without moving. Then he gradually came to his senses and recovering full consciousness, he remembered what had happened and rising swiftly hurried out.

An oppressive half-hour followed. The people knew that some terrible reaction by the GPU agents was about to happen, because the chandelier was still brightly lighting the room and outside on the platform hasty steps and shouts could be heard. Passengers exchanged glances and whispered to each other. Some couldn't hide their extreme anxiety. One could feel that people were seeking to find a way of escape. They were greatly agitated and looking for some means to save themselves. But there was nothing they could do. They were trapped in this huge waiting room like animals in a cage.

The creaking of the door warned them of the return of the GPU agents. This time there were several of them. The petrified people didn't pretend to sleep anymore and they watched every move of the agents with strained attention. The GPU agents began checking the documents. No one escaped this ordeal.

At four o'clock in the morning, the first of the local trains was due to leave, but none of the passengers was able to travel by it, because the check-up was not completed, and no one was permitted to leave the waiting room. Many of the travelers had to wait another twenty-four hours to catch the next morning's train. As the documents were checked, the passengers were ordered to move to the left or to the right side of the room, and one could only suspect that there was some difference between those who were on the right, because there were fewer of them than those on the left. “Probably they would be checked more thoroughly in the GPU offices,” I thought.

By half past four the agents began to hurry and the checking of the documents became selective. Now they did not look inside of all passengers' papers. They inspected the papers of some passengers more attentively and allowed the others just to flash their papers in front of them and asked them only, “Where are you coming from?” or “Where are you going?” And, if they were satisfied with the answer, they directed them to the left and let them through without opening the documents.

When my turn came, I held my military card high above my head and waved my hand very casually almost like teasing the agent, “Here it is, take it and check it!”

The GPU agent looked straight in my eyes and asked, “Where are you going?”

I answered promptly, “Home, to Nikitovka.”

The GPU agent did not look at my card, but simply gestured for me to pass to the left side of the room. For some unknown reason, I did not appear suspicious to him.

The GPU agents did not finish their inspection till five o'clock in the morning. About seventy men were on the right side of the room; they were held as suspects and taken to the local GPU prison. I was lucky, I was not among them. I was free. The others were not as fortunate. I heard that after a few months in prison, they were all sent to concentration camps without a trial. In those days such tragic occurrences happened often in the life of ordinary people.

## Wrangel's Army Volunteer

In tears Musya Berezhnaya came running to Orest Mikhailovich.

"For God's sake, Orest Mikhailovich, help me... I've just arrived, cannot recognize home... Vanya<sup>1</sup> is sitting and drinking... There're bottles, bottles on the table, empty ones and those filled with wine... He had sold everything to get drink... Only the table and the chair are left..."

Orest Mikhailovich had to get up. He came to his brother-in-law Vanya and saw that he had actually sold everything for a drink. In a single room, where the Berezhnoys lived, only the chair and the table were left.

"Vanya, what've you been doing, brother?"

"Orest, I drink..."

"I can see it, but why?"

"I'm nearly through with it. Just my wife came at the wrong time..."

"But why? What did happen?"

"Nothing new, Orest... It's lucky she has not brought our daughter... I'd feel ashamed of myself, if the little one saw me like that... And you should understand me... if there's no way out..."

"But you have a job!"

"What job?" Ivan Gavryilovich<sup>2</sup> nearly shouted and smiled bitterly. "That's why I sent away my family from the sin... There is no job for me!"

"What you mean?"

Ivan Gavryilovich silently pulled out from his jacket his wallet, opened it, and pulled out his military service card.

"I'll show you, Orest, only you—nobody else..."

"Vanya, you can't!" cried out his frightened wife, who had been silent until now,

"You can't show such things to anybody, don't you understand?"

"Musya, I know who I am talking to... I did not lose my brains yet... Don't bother to think about it..." he opened a small gray book, "Read it..."

"Wrangel's army<sup>3</sup> volunteer," Orest Mikhailovich read.

"Yes, yes, brother, volunteer in the Wrangel's army! Nobody else... That's why I... am on the binge... You should forgive me... but my mind is working... satisfactory... As a Wrangel's army volunteer, I have to change the jobs four, even five times in a year... And every year or two I have to change my location in space place... from the Caucasus... to Siberia..."

"But nobody has touched you so far, right?"

"Not yet, thank God, but... sometimes I think...it would have been better if they did..."

"Vanya, don't talk such a nonsense!" Musya threw up her hands.

"Where shall I go?.. Listen only, Orest... They hire me... I work...I don't go for a military registration... everything is all right... But longer than two-three months one

cannot stretch it... Somebody reminds me, "When, dear comrade, are you going to register?.." I go there... They register me... without saying anything... and when you come to work, that's the end... That's why I drink... It is, brother, like that, all my life long... Don't you know that I'm not alone like this?.."

"But you have a family, Vanya!"

"It's my unwitting sin... Shouldn't I have got married?.. But it was not my mistake, Orest... I did not know what it meant – the workers' and peasants'... No, I knew it, that's why I became volunteer in the Wrangel's Army, but I didn't know they would take vengeance all life long..."

"But you can lose your card," suggested Orest Mikhailovich, seeing Vanya's and his wife's despair.

"I have lost it... It is useless... That's why I am drinking... and would drink... as long as my life is like that... And you, Musya, leave me... You can see... I cannot be either a husband or a father... Leave me alone, all of you... It's a plague here..." Vanya filled another glass of vodka and gulped it to the bottom, sniffed at a piece of bread, salted it and put it in his mouth.

"Now it's better. 'Neither tears nor kisses...' I am a stranger for you... and you for me... You'd better leave me..."

Musya made a sign to Orest Mikhailovich and they both left. Any words and efforts of persuasion were in vain.

## An Act of Despair

Two days after the “feast during the plague,” as Ivan himself called his drinking-bouts,<sup>1</sup> he walked outside. His head was still heavy and his feet were not yet stepping securely over the sidewalk. But a decision taken as a toast with the last drink was unbending, “I have to end this ordeal.” It was a decision to commit a sin, but he couldn’t live this way anymore. “Let the GPU take care of me,” he decided.

He reached the GPU headquarters, entered the front door, and announced, “Arrest me!”

They led him directly to the chief of the GPU<sup>2</sup> office. Ivan repeated his request, “Arrest me!”

A little man with dark hair was sitting behind the desk. He calmly removed his heavy horn-rimmed spectacles, placed them on the desk, and slowly approached Ivan. “Are you out of your mind? It’s the first time that I have heard such a request,” he said with astonishment. “Are you some kind of a criminal?”

“Yes, I am the criminal,” Ivan answered firmly.

The GPU chief walked toward a big window and sat halfway on the windowsill. Then without looking at the self-proclaimed criminal, calmly asked, “Tell me, what kind of a crime you have committed?”

“Being born on this God’s earth,” Ivan answered.

The GPU chief turned sharply toward Ivan and ordered him, “Sit down and tell me everything. But try to make sense out of what you are saying!”

Ivan pulled out his military card, threw it on the chief’s desk, and sat down in a chair. The chief walked toward the desk, took the card, and after putting on his spectacles and inspecting the card commented, “A-a-a, my dear, you are *vrangelyevyets*.”

“Yes,” answered Ivan and added a proverb, “What is written with a pen, cannot be chopped off with a hatchet!”

“Well,” asked the GPU chief, “What is your crime?”

“That’s it!” stated Ivan. “That’s the crime!”

“Are you working?” questioned the GPU chief.

“No!” Ivan replied harshly.

“Why?” asked the GPU chief very calmly.

“Nobody will hire me!” Ivan screamed and nervously pulled his small penknife out of his pocket. In desperation he began to cut his wrists and poke the blade into his chest. He felt himself suffocating and began to scream, “No! It is impossible to live like this! Arrest me, or kill me, or let me live!” Ivan was becoming nervously exhausted and started to talk in hardly connected phrases, “Let me live at least for a while like a normal human being... I honestly looked to find work... traveled everywhere... from Caucasus to Vladivostok... everywhere it’s the same... I’ve lost everything... lost my wife and my daughter... I am the criminal... *Vrangelyevyets*... deport me... shoot me!” And the loud burst of sobbing of an adult man resounded in the large room of GPU chief’s office and

beyond in the corridor.

The GPU chief was now sitting at his desk and unemotionally listening to the incoherent "confession" of a "criminal." He did not even stop Ivan from cutting himself.

"Desperation," with a wicked smile the GPU chief stated, more to himself than to the man sitting in front of him. Then he added spitefully, "What are you complaining about? You are lucky that until now nobody has touched you. You were capable of fighting us? Now learn to live with us."

"But how?!" asked crying Ivan. "At least help me to find work."

"This is not an employment office," the GPU chief said and added, "Have you lived somehow until now? Continue to live the same way."

"Is that a life?" asked Ivan bitterly.

"For you, there is no other way," confirmed the GPU chief. "Then you had better arrest me, put me in prison, deport me..." pleaded Ivan.

"I have no such orders," replied the GPU chief calmly.

"I tried to steal... to be arrested," explained Ivan.

"Well, what happened then?" asked the GPU chief with amusement.

Ivan explained bitterly, "They caught me, because I was not running away... then brought me to *militsia* quarters... they beaten me unmercifully and then... they let me go..."

"Wonderful!" ridiculed him the GPU chief. "For being foolish you didn't deserve anything more."

"What can I do now?" asked Ivan.

"First, calm yourself down," said the GPU chief, "and then..." Ivan looked at him expecting to hear some meaningful suggestion. "Then, go and find yourself a place to work."

Ivan replied hopelessly in a feeble voice, "But nobody will hire me..."

"If you search well, you will find something."

Ivan began to beg him, "Couldn't you help me, not as a GPU chief but as a human being?"

The GPU chief looked at Ivan with disdain and told him bluntly and sternly, "This I cannot do. Clean up the blood, button-up your shirt, and get out of here. And keep in mind that no good shall come from this kind of performance. And in the future don't repeat such foolish actions."

Ivan suddenly felt weak. All the energy and decisiveness had left his body and mind. He got scared when he realized where he was and the kind of risk he had placed himself in.

The GPU chief called an agent and pointing at Ivan said, "See this wailing creature to the door."

Ivan got out of the building and slowly walked toward his home. He was as if in a trance, without thoughts or desires. He walked in the room and collapsed on the floor.

He woke up late in the afternoon, aching from sleeping all day on the hard floor. Suddenly he remembered his visit to the GPU. He felt not only nauseated from what happened, but became scared for the consequences of that visit. The GPU chief had been too calm and too indifferent to his confessions. If he didn't have instructions to arrest him yesterday, he might now after Ivan's foolish behavior had attracted attention to himself. The GPU chief could probably receive orders today or tomorrow.

He jumped up and collected a few items in his bag and quickly walked out of the room. Without waiting for the local railroad branch Vyetka train, he reached the railroad station by foot; there he boarded the first freight train going north. "It will take me far away from my hometown", he thought, accommodating himself on the floor of the car.

In about a month Musya received a letter from the town of Yakutsk in Siberia. Ivan wrote to that he was working as a bookkeeper in one of the city offices.

"For how long?" she thought with a sigh.

Ivan's daughter Lena remembers that her mother never told her anything bad about her father and never accused him of anything. Her impression about her father remained sorrowful for all his suffering. She believed that he was an unfortunate man who probably couldn't find himself and his place in life and that everything went wrong and had been distorted in his life. She felt that God should forgive him for his intentional or unintentional sins.

## The Last Encounter

When I arrived from Novosibirsk<sup>1</sup> to the native Ukraine, I decided first to look for work in the town of Taganrog where my sister Anya and my cousin Bonifaty lived. I decided that I would not stop to see my sister Vera in Nikitovka, although I had to travel through it, because it was too dangerous for me to show myself there after I had escaped from there after being declared as a *lishenyets*. Since then, every time I had to travel through the railway station of Nikitovka, I was afraid of being recognized as a White Army volunteer. I was afraid to return to the hamlet where I was born and where I lived during my childhood and my youth and for short periods of time following my return from Crimea after the defeat of the White Army.

Usually, before arriving at the station in Nikitovka, I would climb on the upper sleeping shelf of a car compartment and, turning my face toward the back wall, would pretend that I was asleep. At the station in Nikitovka the trains stood a long time waiting for the connecting train passengers. I was on the alert all the time listening to the voices of the newly arriving passengers. I had only one wish not to encounter anyone who knew my past and me.

The truth is, at the bottom of my soul I wanted to jump out the car and run to the native places, to my father's home, to encounter my sister Vera, my childhood and school friends, my neighbors, and my acquaintances. But I couldn't do this because I was a political outlaw. Anyone who served faithfully and loyally the new Bolshevik regime could have reported on me to the GPU immediately, and I would be arrested on the spot in the railroad car, in the station, on the street, in the market, in the house, or in the store. Such was the law at that time. But I wanted to live free and had to calm down all my desires and quietly lay on the hard sleeping shelf remembering my beautiful past, my childhood and youth passed in this small hamlet.

That's what happened this time when I was traveling to the town of Taganrog. The train was nearing Nikitovka. I climbed to the upper sleeping shelf, turned my face toward the wall, and closed my eyes.

The train stopped. I was listening to the voices of the new passengers and thinking, "How did it happen that I cannot reveal myself to the people I know?" And the answer was clear as the God's day, "Because I have been *byelogvardyeyets*!"<sup>2</sup> Because I am the enemy of the Bolsheviks! Because I fought against them with the weapons in my hands! Because I went voluntarily into the White Army! Because in this small hamlet everybody knew all about it! Am I remorseful that this happened? No! I was the enemy of the Bolsheviks, remained the same now, and will be the same until the end of my days on this earth. But I want to live and for this reason I have to avoid encounters with all those who know my past."

Suddenly, I heard a familiar voice. My heart trembled, "That's her!" I had to use my willpower to keep myself from jumping down from the sleeping shelf. But I had no doubts in my mind, "It's her, my very trusted, very best, closest friend from my childhood and youth. A friend, from whom I had no secrets, as she ever had anything to hide from



me!" Now she was in my car compartment asking the passengers, "Is this place taken?"

Of course, it was her voice! And now inside of me all turned upside down and in my mind I was making arguments with myself, "What should I do? Should I reveal myself to her?" The answer was clear, "Of course! There could not be any doubt! What could have changed in our relationship? Well, we didn't see each other for a few years. So what? If she had a chance to get married during this time, this could not affect our friendship! It was not love that was binding us, but only genuine friendship. And, after all, she was always so nice, so good. She couldn't forget our sincere friendship, the beginning of which I don't even remember, maybe from the time we wore diapers..."

I had the impulse to jump down from the shelf, but... Again the doubts were stopping me, "And if she?... No, no, it is impossible! Why impossible? Well, the times have changed and the people have changed! And how much they had changed! Some of the best became the worst and some of the worst became the best... But she was a white bone and a blue blood... No, no, it is impossible that she had changed!"

The train moved. I couldn't resist anymore and jumped down from the top shelf, "Varya! Is it you?"

Amazed to see me, she looked coldly at me with her blue eyes and I felt something alien and strange in her voice as she asked, "A-a-a... Is it you, Orest?"

"Are you surprised?" I asked.

"Y-e-es... I am surprised." Then she smiled and that something alien and strange that I heard in her voice had passed swiftly and disappeared instantly in her smile. She became friendly and attentive and said to me, "Well, sit down near me. Tell me, how many years, how many winters!"

"Yes, Varya, for quite a long time we haven't seen each other," I agreed. "You probably had time to get married."

"Oh, no!" she replied quickly.

I smiled and jokingly said, "Were you waiting for me?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed and her voice sounded icy and again somewhat alien and strange. But in a while her nicety returned to her and she said, "After all, between us there was nothing more than a friendship. Isn't this true?"

"Of course," I agreed with her, "But I saw that you got scared to see me."

"No, I am not timorous," she replied.

"I know that. But so many changes have taken place."

"In me?" she asked.

"Yes. In you, Varya."

"I have grown up, became smarter," she replied.

"You have never been stupid," I said it as a compliment.

"Do you visit your family often?" she asked suddenly.

"Sometimes," I replied somewhat reluctantly and vaguely.

"I never hear about it when I come to Nikitovka," she said this with the strange tone in her voice, like implying that she should have known it for some reason. Then changing again to her sweet voice she asked me, "Where are you going now?"

"To Taganrog," I answered simply.

"I am going there, too," she said and asked me again, "Are you working there?"

"No, I want to visit my cousin," I told her the truth and asked, "And you?"

"I work there," she replied, "Sometimes I come here to visit my mother." Then she

asked again, "And where do you live?"

I faltered because at that time I had no residence and no job, "You see, I am looking for work."

"But you live somewhere?" she insisted.

"In Kharkov," I answered picking by chance the name of the city and felt that I should justify my reason, "You see, I don't like the big city. I want to see how things are now in Taganrog."

"It is a nice town," she said, "I like it."

"I like it, too," I replied, "maybe it is because we studied there." Then I felt the need to change a direction in our conversation and asked her, "By the way, what is in my gymnasium now?"

"In the Alexander the First, the Blessed?" she pronounced its name with irony in her voice. I didn't understand her irony this time. Then she answered proudly, "Now it is a military school."

"And in your Maryinsky Gymnasium?" I asked.

She replied again as if she was pleased with the change of name, "Now it is called a Railway School."

Our conversation stopped short. The questions were becoming too close to the past, which I was reluctant to talk about in the train with all kinds of passengers around us. In my soul I was glad that the silence had set in and was grateful to Varya for her, as it seemed to me, tactfulness. I felt that the old bond of understanding each other's thoughts was still intact.

Until the end of our voyage we occasionally exchanged some empty, short, or monosyllable remarks and, only before arriving at Taganrog, when the liveliness took over all passengers, Varya began to talk about all the changes that happened in town during the time I was not there.

Finally, the train stopped and we walked out to the platform. Varya asked me, "May I visit you?"

"Of course, I will be very happy to see you again," I answered sincerely.

"Then give me your address where you will be staying," she replied, "maybe I will try to see you if I find the time."

"Good," I said. We entered the railway station and I gave her the address of my cousin Bonifaty.

"May I also visit you?" I asked her.

"No, it is inconvenient. I live in a woman's dormitory and don't want any gossips."

We said good-bye. When I exited to Nikolayevsky Street an elegant carriage went by at full speed. It seemed to me that I saw Varya sitting in it. A somewhat unpleasant feeling came over me, but it quickly dissipated. I turned to Gogolevsky Alley and to Petrovsky Street, where I encountered my comrade from gymnasium, *Sashen'ka*, as we called Sasha, whose full name was Alexander, who was hurrying to work. He offered to share with me a bottle of wine that night, "We will remember the good old days!" he said saluting me and ran away.

I spent the day with my cousin Bonifaty. The present was sad and we talked about the old days, which on the background of the Soviet reality were especially beautiful. In the evening I went to visit my friend.

Sashen'ka and I spent the night reminiscing about the days of our youth. With the

bottle of wine our conversation was flowing really easy. Besides, in our school days there were no dark and stormy clouds. We parted in the morning when he had to go to work. Only then I mentioned to him about my volunteering in the White Army and the consequences it left on my life.

"Well, let's hope that the dark clouds clear up," he encouraged me at parting, "and, as the night slowly becomes a day, the sky shall become bright and the sun will shine again over you!"

"I hope that we shall see each other again soon," I replied.

I returned to my cousin's home and was surprised to see the confusion, the fear and nervousness that were reigning in his family.

"What happened?" I asked him.

"Are you asking us what happened? Are you crazy! You have let us down!" my cousin exploded in accusations. "To whom did you give our address stating that you are staying here?" Then he ordered me, "For God's sake get out of here immediately!"

"Wait," I said, "please explain to me what happened here."

"What happened?!" exclaimed my cousin. "You have a nerve to ask! Last night the GPU, you know that's the State Political Administration a successor to CheKa, came here to arrest you! They made a search and dug everywhere. They were asking where you were staying overnight."

"What did you tell them?" I asked him.

"I told them that I didn't know."

"Who came?" I asked him again.

"Are you so naive. Don't you know who is coming at night?" replied my cousin angrily.

"Of course I know." I said. "Was also a woman with them?"

"It was not a woman, but a young GPU woman," he corrected.

"Then I know who she is. I trusted her, because she used to be my best friend," I replied feeling guilty. "Forgive me, I didn't intend to bring you such trouble."

"You better hurry—they will come again," he suggested.

"When they come, tell them that I left Taganrog for good, and that you don't know where I am going. Well, I better leave. Good-bye!" And I left my cousin's home in a hurry.

I understood that I had to leave town immediately. I also knew that I would be watched. I was walking and thinking about how to escape from being caught. I knew that it was very unlikely that they would grab me on the street with people around me. I knew that now, if it was possible, most arrests were done at night. But I was sure that they would definitely begin to follow me as soon as I left my cousin's home. I still had many friends and acquaintances in this town. But how could I dare to go and visit someone now? Of course, I wouldn't.

When I came to Petrovsky Street, I suddenly saw Varya on the corner of the city gardens. This was not a surprise for me, because I was sure that the night visit by the GPU agents to my cousin was the doing of her hands. For this reason this encounter with her was both unpleasant and dangerous.

But I had to hide my apprehension and with an air of a carefree man exclaimed, "Varya, how nice to see you again!"

"Where did you sleep last night?" she asked me without paying attention to my greetings.

In her question I had the confirmation to my suspicions, and the answer came to my mind, "Varya was at my cousin's home last night. Otherwise, how could she know that I stayed overnight at some other place?"

"I was at my friend's place. Why?" I answered with complete unconcern.

She probably believed that I had not yet been to my cousin's home and didn't know that she had been there last night with the other GPU agents, because she changed her way of talking to me, "You see, I came by last evening... I wanted to stay with you for a couple of hours. But I was told that you were not home," she lied to me, confirming again my suspicions.

"Oh," I said almost casually, "I have not been at my cousin's yet. I am sure that he will not forget to tell me about you."

We stopped at the entrance to the city gardens. She asked me, "And now where are you going?"

I didn't answer her question and instead I casually pointed to the building of the former Men's Gymnasium and said to her, "You see, over there I left all that was dear to my heart!"

She obviously was not interested and repeated her question, "Where are you headed now?"

I hesitated to answer her. At that moment a car rolled up, probably the only taxi that was in town, and it stopped very close to us. The taxi driver jumped out, and opening the door of his old car, politely said to me, "I am very sorry to be late. You asked me to bring you to the rail station?"

"Yes, yes!" I replied hastily and instinctively rushed into the car.

I heard Varya's voice asking me again, "Where are you going?!"

"Home! Farewell!" these words I pronounced when the taxi was already rolling on the road.

The taxi driver was driving fast. He told me, "Your cousin Bonifaty asked me to find you and to help you to get out of town."

After turning toward the Railway Square, he continued to speed up without ever slowing down and soon he turned to Gymnasium's Street and then to Chekhovsky's Street. With the same speed he rushed forward in the direction of the harbor, leaving behind waggoners, houses, trees, and pedestrians.

When we reached the Krepost suburb, my savior taxi driver turned into a dead-end lane and stopped. "Do you remember me?" he asked removing his sunglasses.

I answered with surprise, "Sergey, my dear friend! How can I forget you!"

"Do you know who that young woman is?" He pronounced the words "young woman" with sarcasm.

"Yes, she used to be my best friend during my childhood and youth," I said making an emphasis on the words "used to be."

"Before she was a *Chekistka*," he called her by a coined name for a female agent of CheKa," and now she is a GPU agent with a terrible reputation. You have to escape from here as soon as possible. You cannot travel on the train now, because she heard me mentioning it. I will bring you to the port. The steamboat will leave in about a half-hour to Rostov-on-Don. From there you should find your way out by yourself. But be careful, GPU has their agents everywhere." He started the car and in about ten minutes we were in the port.

"This might be of use to you," he said, giving me a small package. "Remember, you can make only four shots." I didn't want to take it, but my former school friend insisted, "You don't know what will be waiting for you in Rostov. Take it. It's true that it is an old Buldozhka," he called it by nickname for a popular old hand gun, "but it can still provide help when needed. Have no doubts it was tested more than once! And now, hurry! Buy the ticket and hide right away in the ship's hold below the lower deck!"

We said "farewell" and in a few minutes I was sitting deep in the ship's hold among muzhiks and peasant women, speculators and small thieves, listening to the low hum of human voices. The years of NEP had opened the doors into a new way of life, and everyone who had some initiative was using it to catch up with what they had lost before. That's what my friend the taxi driver told me, too, that he had the only taxi in town and that business was good.

The package was hampering me and made me uncomfortable. I got up and went to the men's room, opened the package, and placed the gun in my pocket. The steamboat lazily moved out of the port. Shortly after we reached the wide Don. Something happened with the engines and we traveled slowly the rest of the trip, as if we were on a pleasure cruise. It took a long time to reach the wide mouth of the River Don.

We arrived in the late afternoon at Rostov-on-Don. I cautiously kept myself behind the other passengers who were rushing to disembark. As I was approaching the ship's ladder I instinctively looked around to inspect the pier to see if there were any suspicious figures that could be waiting for me. Most of the pier was packed with passengers waiting to embark. Only a narrow passage enclosed with heavy nautical cord was left for the disembarking passengers. On that side of the pier, at the end of the passage, I saw Varya. She was standing there with one robust young man dressed in the GPU uniform. I understood everything and thought, "My good friend was right. Buldozhka gun might become handy after all."

I began to slowly come down the ladder and, as soon as my feet were on the ground, instead of following the disembarking passengers, I sneaked under the nautical cord on the side leading into town and quickly inserted myself in the crowd of passengers waiting to embark. With difficulty, making my way against the pressure of the human bodies, stumbling against the bags, baskets, and other luggage, I reached the opposite side of the pier. Only then I looked back to the other side, where I had seen Varya with her companion. They were not there anymore and I assumed that they saw me disappear in the crowd and would try to follow me.

I began to run from the pier and turned into the first side street, then turned right into another, and left into the next one, hoping that this unpredictable changing of direction would help me to lose my pursuers. The last turn I made was into a narrow, completely deserted dead-end alley with the back walls of the buildings connected to each other. On both sides there were no windows on the walls and the back doors were locked. By this time I was completely out of breath and was ready to give up running.

As I passed by one of the houses, I saw the back door open and a man dressed in white and wearing a white hat was standing inside the door looking at me with the scared eyes. When I reached him, he called me in Russian with a heavy Armenian accent, "Come here, please. Come quickly, please." I jumped in the open door and the Armenian quickly closed and locked it with the heavy bolt.

I found myself in the back room of an Armenian bakery full of empty flour bags. "Wait here, please," said the Armenian. And in a few seconds he brought for me a white shirt, pants, and a baker's hat. "Please, put the baker's clothes on quickly," he said. In a few minutes I was in the bakery near the large container and was helping him to mix the dough. He didn't ask me from whom I was running, because in those days anyone knew that a decent looking man could only be running from GPU agents.

I stayed in the bakery for the rest of the day and no one came to look for me. I decided that I would leave the town the next morning. Before going home, the baker gave me a freshly baked loaf of bread and a cup of tea and left me to sleep on the empty flour bags in the back room. Before locking the door he said to me, "Wait here until tomorrow morning."

During the night I had a terrible nightmare. My dream began from the moment I put my feet on the pier. I was not able to escape into the crowd; instead I saw Varya and the big man dressed in the GPU uniform come close to me. She warned me, "You are under arrest." And both of them showed me their new handguns. They didn't search me. Varya was giving me commands, "Go ahead! Don't try to run away!" "Now turn right and walk forward!"

In my dream I was walking and weighing the situation. I knew Varya from her early childhood. She was a dexterous and fast acting girl and probably remained the same. Her companion looked like a bear to me; he appeared to be clumsy, but unusually strong. They had two brand new handguns. And I had only one, a very old Buldozhka.

I heard Varya's voice, "Go straight!" Then she commanded again, "Turn left!" I turned into a narrow, completely deserted dead end alley; for some reason it looked very familiar to me, as if I had been there before. The buildings in the alley had the connected back walls and on both sides the back doors were locked and there were no windows. I had a terrible premonition, "This is the end. It must be the dead-end alley where they shoot the enemies of the Bolsheviks."

I continued to walk at the regular pace—I didn't have any place to hurry anyway. And my guards did not press me to go faster. At some point we were walking in a dead-end alley that looked familiar to me. From the sound of their steps on the stones of the pavement I estimated that they were not too close to me. I made a few long steps and then, pulling the Buldozhka from my pocket, suddenly turned toward my guards and fired the first bullet at Varya and the second at the awkward young man in the GPU uniform. I did it so unexpectedly that they had no time to react. I saw them both falling on the pavement and they didn't move when I rushed to run back.

As I was passing one of the houses I saw a back door open and a man dressed in white, who looked also very familiar to me, was standing inside the door and calling me with a heavy Armenian accent, "Come here, please. Come quickly, please." I jumped in the open door and the Armenian quickly closed and locked it with the heavy bolt. He gave me the white work clothes and put me to work in the bakery.

He confirmed my premonition that the dead-end alley was used to execute the "enemies of the Bolsheviks." He said that at night the gravediggers come there and collect the bodies and take them somewhere to bury.

I was wondering what happened to Varya and her companion. Were they wounded and survived? Or were they dead? If, they were dead, at night would the gravediggers take them and bury them with the "enemies of the Bolsheviks?" I wished

that the latter was true.

At that moment I woke up from the sound of the locks on the heavy bakery door. It was very early in the morning. The Armenian baker came in and saluted me. Then he told me, "I will bring you out of town. Help me load the empty flour bags on the cart." When we finished loading, he said, "Climb on the cart and cover yourself with the flour bags. Don't get out until I tell you it is safe."

Very slowly he drew out of town. The cart pulled by the horse did not attract any attention as we traveled on back roads, and nobody stopped us all the way to Bataysk. There the Armenian baker stopped the cart and told me to get out and said that from here it should be safe for me to travel on my own.

I asked, "I don't know how to thank you for saving my life."

He said wisely, "God rewards for the good deeds." And giving me a strong handshake, said, "God, be with you!"

From there I traveled by train to Caucasus to cover my tracks, and then returned to Ukraine.

In the years that followed, I often thought that my dream of killing Varya and the other GPU agent was a symbolic wish of killing all zealous Bolsheviks, all CheKa and GPU agents, and putting an end to my running away from them.

## A Man Reborn

*I mused about workings of the Soviet system. Could there be a way that could use its bureaucratic weakness to oversmart it, to turn it against itself? And in that flight of my imagination, in my notebook I wrote a short story, "A Man Reborn."*

– Orest M. Gladky

The hot summer day had ended. The sun just down. The air still hot, dry and dusty. A man—The Man—in a wrinkled, worn-out gray suit sat at river's edge near a bridge, his visored cap on the grass beside him. The murky water in the mid-summer river barely flowed.<sup>1</sup>

The Man's eyes pensively focus on the horizon. They are vacant eyes; he has driven thought from his mind. Maybe he is tired from the long journey. Or perhaps it is that his mind has wearied from the burden of thoughts of the past. Then it seems to him his being is separating from his body, and in that disembodied state with no heaviness in his heart, he unconsciously allows his exhausted body to rest for just a few moments. Then, with an abrupt hand movement, as if trying to dispel drowsiness, he brushes away the hair which droops on his forehead. His eyes shift to the hypnotic flow of the river.

In my own imagination I transformed myself into This Man and in him allowed to drift the thoughts which tormented me. "Why I come here? To see once more my wife and daughter, even if only from a distance so as to not reopen old wounds. Should I try to see them? Or not? Should I try to go home? Or not?"

My wife and daughter live in this town. They have a roof under which they have some physical comfort. But they bear great sorrow because I, husband and father, am an exile, not by choice. I am trouble to my dear ones. My rare visits bring them deep pain. Would it be better for me to put a final irreversible end to all this. The deepest wounds heal, after all, though heavy scars remain."

And I continued to further imagine I was That Man by the river and what I might have done in his life...

That day The Man walked about forty kilometers. He had not a penny in his pocket, nor a piece of bread in hand. Always, always he lived at risk of seizure by the persecutors. He made this difficult trek for but a single reason, to see once more those dearest faces, and then, perhaps again disappear into unknown, and who knows how long.

Summer dusk descended. The dust slowly settled. The air cooled. Breathing was easier. But The Man's exhausted body remained inert, his legs unresponsive to command. Then, abruptly, The Man realized he must without further delay enter the town. Full dark would envelop him before he reached their house—his house—and conceal him from his loved ones.

His legs, swollen from the hot miles, move slowly, reluctantly but irresistibly toward the home that is not home. As weary steps lead him into the town center he encounters a group of frolicking young people, their carefree antics taking up the entire



sidewalk. To avoid unwanted confrontation and attention The Man moves onto the cobble stone roadway. Darkness fast increases and the occasional streetlight begins to feebly illuminate the sidewalk, where people appear to him now as moving silhouettes.

He nears his objective and rehearses his route. It remained only to proceed through the town center, to the square where there is a once-a-church now converted by the Soviets into a cinema theatre, then turn into Railroad Street... and come to the dear house!

"Here I have to be very cautious," The Man thinks, "because I might meet my dearest ones, who could be returning home from somewhere."

What he should do in such a chance encounter is not clear in his mind, so The Man keeps a watchful eye on passing women, and listens intently to recognize a voice. The few people he meets seem indifferent to his trudging presence.

Finally here is the old, gray wooden fence. Beyond it, farther into the yard, stands a small house. The Man carefully opens the gate to walk cautiously along the brick walkway leading to the house.

He is found out! But it is the white and fluffy Spitz dog, Kashtan, who bounds toward the Man in joyous recognition, but silently as if he knows the need for secrecy. Kashtan only rubs against The Man, nuzzles the dusty shoes, then stretches upward to nose The Man's hands, which gently pet the dog, though his mind is not on the four-legged household guard.

The Man hurries, quietly, toward the small, brightly illuminated window. The shutters are still open; a stream of light flows into the night, revealing the flower garden cultivated for delight and pleasure by the loving hands of his daughter.

"In this garden," The Man asks himself, "had she unburdened herself of heavy and painful thoughts about the father who was so close in heart but so far away... somewhere so far away? Maybe this very flowerbed was watered with tears that nourished and brought to bloom these beautiful sweet-scented flowers, this rosebush, tears that flowed with love of the two women for The Man, husband and father, a man not dead nor buried but still gone into another world..."

Still hidden in shadow The Man moved closer to peak through the window to observe the life inside. Near the window at the desk sat his wife. Sinking heart aching, he thought, "She has become much older; the wrinkles on her face are deeper..." A lock of hair gleaming silver; the glasses made her face look thinner.

She worked with strained attention. Books and notes were on the desk. Intermittently her hand dipped her pen toward the inkwell, revealing the flash of her wedding ring. "Breaking the rules of Soviet society, she continued to wear it," he thought.

Suddenly The Man clearly heard a voice. "Probably the porch door is open," he thought, "I should be more careful." Maintaining his silence he hid himself in the wild grapevines descending the porch side. He listened.

"Well, *Mamusya*,<sup>1</sup> the tea is ready," said the daughter. "Stop working and let us drink tea with tasty preserves."

"One moment, little one."

For a moment there was silence, then tinkling of cups and saucers. Again the voices were heard now from the kitchen where wife and daughter drank tea.

"Mama, dear, tell me about Papa. Why he is not with us?"

"Lyalya, I have already told you, that is how it is and that is how it must be. Father

cannot be with us any more. The time will come when you will learn why, but for now I will tell you nothing, neither lies nor truth."

"But when, finally, will I find out, *Mamochka*?<sup>2</sup> Papa's image I see always in my mind. Because of him I try to do everything the best I can, to study and to work. But I always wonder why other fathers are with their families, but my father... Where is he? I don't know."

"What else can we do, *Lyalyechka*?<sup>3</sup> That's how things have turned out in our lives. It had to be this way. Console yourself that we are better off than your father—we have a roof, a piece of bread to eat. But he? ... We don't know..." her voice faded into silence.

The Man's thoughts churned in nervous upheaval. He longed to be in the house. His tiredness and pain were gone. His heart yearned for his loved ones. But had strength of will to refuse his heart, to remain outside their lives and not reopen the wounds and sorrows of his departure and absence. It was this will which kept him concealed in the dusty leaves of the wild grape vines, and out of his house.

The talk in the house stopped and he heard only the clatter of dishes. The Man thought, "No! There must be an end to this foolish thinking of mine." And he cautiously but decisively freed himself from the vines, for one more glimpse through the window of his wife and daughter, now 18 years old and grown up. Blinded by the emotion he turned from the window, stepped lightly onto the grass and walked with determination toward the gate.

The Man pondered, "Why do I try to save myself? Why should I worry them? They have a deep wound. It will never heal. So why pick it open, make it even deeper? These are my choices," The Man pondered, "Either I must somehow be born again, or I must perish. No! It is not possible to exist live like this any longer. No!"

The town fell silent. From the town center the frolicking young people returned to their homes. Infrequently, security guards moved watchfully among the shops. The Man crossed the Square to the small public garden. He sat on the bench, hoping to rest. And to forget.

But new thoughts coursed helter-skelter through his brain and he had no strength to quiet them or to quell the torment in his soul. Fretfully, he paced from bench to bench, until finally, after restless hours, he seized on a singular idea: end his present exile life and be reborn in this same God's world...It was a wild idea that fired his brain but he could see no other way. And it might work.

"To live or not to live? To be or not to be?" He continued to ponder. "I cannot exist this way longer; I must appear anew in this world. If the path to execution of rebirth be painful for me, so be it. But after that I would be able to exist unhindered in the very same country that now refuses to allow me a life."

Abruptly The Man rose from the bench, reached into his trousers, pulled out a pocketknife and resolutely strode toward the shops lining the Square. Peering intently into the dark, he could make out the outline of a security guard who lay asleep on the wide sill of a shop window. The Man went directly to the door of that shop, fumbled for its padlock and began to pick in its keyhole with his pocketknife.

The shop guard still slept. For a moment The Man felt terror at his own brazen action but gathered his resolve and to speed his plan to fruition he sharply jerked the padlock. The rattle of metal brought the shop guard sharply to his feet to throws himself on The Man and scream for help. Other guards scurry to help and several hands grab

The Man.

There is confusion among the guards when The Man is silent to their questions, but after brief consultation among themselves they lead him to the local office of militia.

At the militia desk in wrinkled uniform sits a young, red-haired fellow with a short, turned-up nose. He listlessly listens to the guards, glances at his watch, then addresses The Man.

"Were you going to commit a burglary?"

"Yes," The Man replies.

The red-haired militia functionary produces a printed form of interrogation protocol and begins questioning the criminal and the witnesses, the shop guards. However, it is quickly apparent that this limb of the law is troubled not at all by the bizarre personal information given to him by the criminal. He questions, then writes, with no thought given to what the responses of the criminal might imply. To him the words seem to be without meaning, just words, words to write on a form.

"Name?"

"Ukrop (Dill)."

"Patronymic name?"

"Pomidorovich (Tomatovich)."

"Last name?"

"Ogurtsov (Cucumbers)."

After all the formalities were observed the criminal was placed in a cell for temporary detention.

"Idiots," The Man thought, "They didn't even beat me up. If everything will go this smoothly I will be turned officially into completely-processed-by-protocol Potato. Maybe even more! This process will give me a birth certificate into this God's world. Now I am officially Ukrop Pomidorovich Ogurtsov (Dill Tomatovich Cucumbers)!" Tiredness took over and he fell soundly asleep on the hard bench.

In about two weeks the trial was held. The Man was condemned to one year in prison for a nebulous, undefined crime and under no known penal law. But most strangely, as he was processed through many justice departments and penitentiaries he was never asked the obvious intelligent question, "What's the devil!? ... What kind of a name is this, Ukrop Pomidorovich Ogurtsov (Dill Tomatovich Cucumbers)?"

Thus, into God's world was born a new citizen, who in the not so distant past was a political fugitive, who in the present is a confessed criminal serving the time of his sentence, but who in the future will be a free citizen of his country.

His criminal past is the sure guarantee of an undisturbed future life in the Soviet Union. The Man learned this fact through the long years of observation and bitter experience in life; it confirmed this basic formula not only in his own life but also in the whole Soviet State.

All that The Man had long searched for came about so easily and relatively quickly. He was, finally, to be able to be with his family again. And my own imagination of being transformed into The Man has given my mind and soul blessed relief from the terrible thoughts that were overwhelming my soul...

---

*Re-reading the story, I was surprised that the idea had not come to mind sooner,*

*maybe right after I returned home from the White Army, since all my adult life I had been running to evade the clutches of CheKa, GPU, KGB, and NKVD.*

## The Forgotten Letter

My dear friend! Now the time and the distance have separated us so much from the past, that looking back at the hazy distance and barely penetrating with my thoughts the horizon, I do not see familiar faces, I do not recall the horrid events, or hear dear voices. All became pale and dissipated in the following even more horrifying years. Names and events are forgotten... Only the names of some plays and the stage names of some protagonists still remain...

Seaside high waters interchange with tide falls. At times the lived through years rush away from me and other times they wash over me like boisterous, foamy beachcombers... At times the past disappears into nothingness, and then it appears so close to me that it almost becomes reality—I can see and hear everything clearly, but I understand that this is but a mirage...

An end of a journey. A lot of good was done. But even more was left undone. Yet, we had it all—the desire, the will, the time and the place, and, most importantly, there was live material. No, not the physical material, but the living human souls, reaching to find the truth and see the lights. So, with almost everything in my possession, I led them towards the end goal they were striving for. This was on the way—easy. Gullible as they were, they followed... But not all of them reached the ultimate goal... I could not bring them there... I could not bring them because with my hands and feet tied I had to remain motionless. I was suddenly tied down at the main turn!

What a brutal tragedy this was! To be the leader with the gift of sight and sit still in one place! Or be lifted by force and carried into nothingness!..

I know many have reached the goal on their own without my help. Not all the seeds fell in vain. So much has been done, but more left undone!

Whether it is high waters or tide fall, I always remember the day that we met so clearly, as if it were today or yesterday... If you are among the living, then you remember all of its details as I do. Out of all the details the most important thing was intuitive spiritual acceptance.

On the first day of our official acquaintance under the façade of generally accepted in such cases conversations, something new, something bright, something happy, tranquil had opened in our internal worlds... This was neither love nor friendship. This was something greater. We discovered that I was you, and you were me. Such a simple formula of life, but so rare in the world in which we lived!

We did not talk about it. Oh no! How could one speak the words aloud—the revealing words?... But it was true. We talked about the innocent past, about work and about terrible present covered with makeup beyond recognition. We talked sincerely and openly, and is not it surprising—we were not afraid to say even such things for which, if denounced, people paid with their lives! All this happened when we first met! This was when we were just getting to know each other!

Do you remember, we did not fear each other from the first minute of our first encounter! You know, we did not proclaim love, loyalty, or friendship, we did not swear

or take the oath of silence! Later, we already knew a lot about each other. We knew so many facts about each other's lives that, if by chance one of us turned out to be not bad, but just weak man, the other would have been drowned in his own blood. But not because he was a criminal, but because he fought criminals and grew weak in this fight...

Every one of your words was sharp as a razor. It often saved you that the words were under the cover of humor, a joke. I did not lag behind. And they were trying to persuade us as we were alone, and we knew that later they would torture us asking with bias, insisting "Who is he?" Oh, we knew everything about each other! We knew a lot! And, knowing "I believe and confess," we played the role of naive ignoramuses!

And if there were tortures?.. We are people. Human beings. Could we endure intolerable physical pain?..

You know, you have met, like I did, people "from there." Remember? The knocked out teeth and pulled nails—well yes this was nothing! The broken arms and legs, ribs and spine, wrecked skull—would we were able to endure?.. To keep silent?.. My dear friend! My beloved friend! We are human beings. We are men!..

But had we yielded to general human weakness, would we condemn each other out of our own weakness, would we be able to say the word "Scoundrel"!??

We endured spiritual torture with honor. We were not tempted. We endured humiliation, insults, coarse mocking, and bullying in the form of ridicule from ape-like creatures. We lived through deprivation, hunger and cold, not as part of the physical abuses that we did not even notice, but as the emphasis of that arrogant contempt toward us by those four-legged creatures that barely learned to walk on two legs. They were forced to walk on hind legs only by necessity. They needed the other two limbs for revenge—to throttle, and execute by fire! And they, of course, learned to talk. About Darwin. And further they had to learn to speak of Pushkin, Tchaikovsky, Antokolsky, Pavlova, and even Dostoevsky! Not in depth though, just in accordance to the standard. From a certain point of view. They even allowed religion... to fight religion! Dialectically!

Smart people do not always say clever things. Due to their fame they often utter idle phrases, which the crowd, despite their ability, unwilling to sort out, accepts as axiom without criticism.

History, for example, never repeats itself! And people do learn from their mistakes, but to tell the truth, in such small numbers that this accepted formula should not be taken as the rule but rather as a repetitive coincidence.

You said wistfully, "The river does not go back in its course!"

I made a correction, "But it changes its river-bed."

You answered with even greater regret, "This process is so uncertain, so slow that the moves of the turtle seem more like a marathon! And then, how will the river-bed change? In what direction will the new water flow?"

"Natural ways will take it in a natural direction to a place where it should flow. Even now the flow goes naturally."

"The shortcomings in the history are illegal, but natural..."

We contradicted not only each other, but also ourselves. What for? We were looking for the truth. And the truth was looking for us.

It was quite simple. All that was at the bottom rose to the surface. It would be to no avail to search for the law of societal development in that dirt that was freely floating

around us. We were also very well aware that all the light things rise to surface in dirty water; that is why the water is so dirty! One needs to wait for the current to take all this dirt away and for when the alchemists of society will cease muddying the water. In any body of water, however transparent, there is always turbidity.

It was night. You came to my room. We spent time talking about nothing until morning came. But we both knew that we would never meet again...

In this, there was no doubt. The time line was coming to an end... We no longer could belong to each other... we cannot... never... Why, then, we said anything serious? Not a single word? The most important? After all, we belong to each other in all our senses and all our thoughts!

It is strange. The most important escaped us then... And that is probably why we did not even bid one another "Farewell!"

We forgot it was our last night...

One does not talk about death in the presence of a dying person. And we were dying for each other. Trifles were at fault. No, we hid behind trifles from the very worst—from a complete break, from death! That is why we did not say "Goodbye" to each other!

We just went home... without hope to ever meet again....

Why now remind you of myself? So they would ask you again, as they did before, "Who is he?"

And then they would never leave you alone!

---

*A letter was written here, from abroad. But it has not been sent. Why? Perhaps to not reopen partially healed wounds? It has been lying forgotten for a dozen or even more years. But it remained well preserved. Will it ever be sent?*

*I know: the eastern front is without change. How long will this letter lie in my desk drawer?..*

## The Banner of White Armies Young Volunteers

Participants in the civil war, we are all in this campaign. All of us are waiting for orders to advance... Maybe we are still in Kurman-Kemelchi. Perhaps, we are at the Armenian Bazar. Perhaps unnoticed we are already approaching Perikop...<sup>1</sup>

Friends of my Childhood! Friends of my Youth! Even if you are fifty now! But you are as young as before! The same love for motherland and the same youthful ardor still burn inside of you! Answer with your ardent love for Russia! Volunteers of the armies of Alekseev, Narkove, Kornilov, Drozdov, and Cossacks of Kuban and Don! Volunteers of the armies of Denikin and Vrangeli! Kolchakov! The volunteers of Army of General Yudenich!<sup>2</sup> Volunteers of all White Armies! To all, our youthful appeal! Let's prepare an Army of Volunteers!

Let us recall in the midst of today's youth our gray army days filled with love for the Motherland. Let us infuse today's young men and women with our pure sentiment! Let us recount the selfless struggle of child-volunteers, remember those who gave their lives for their Motherland, and remember those who survived. Let us recall the campaigns, the battles and the rare respites, remember our victories and defeats. Let us tell what made us leave our native places homes, tranquility, comfort and peace, our passions, our friends and loved ones and join the ranks of small heroic White Armies in the South, North, East and West of Russia. Let us pour our youth into the Russian youth of today! In this way we will pass our Banner of Young Volunteers of White Armies, so they can carry it to their dear Native Soil!



## Soar Falcons, as Eagles do!..

My “acquaintance” with General Turkul occurred in 1918, when he still held the rank of Captain. It was at the station of Nikitovka. Sound, sturdy, and bold Captain Turkul was conducting a “training session”. His soldiers—all officers—were marching, circling a horse-shoe shaped town square. Briskly was resounding on all sides:

“Soar Falcons, as Eagles do!..

Stop being broken-hearted...”

With what vigor sang these “rank and file” soldiers! How much energy they had! How much fearlessness! And how much devotion, loyalty, duty and love they had towards their homeland! The song had gripped not only the soldiers with the officer’s shoulder-straps, but the residents too, who were feasting their eyes on the “training session”...

And to be sure these “falcons” were indeed fearless—just like their commanding officer! The Reds were in the Popasny region!<sup>1</sup> The Reds were in the Bakhmut region! The Reds were near Magdalinovka Station, in the Sherbinovka region! Captain Turkul dispatched trains from the twenty to thirty railroad cars, to Rota Station, to Magdalinovka Station, and to Mayorskaya. In each train were two to three men with machine-guns. In all directions the brave, courageous “soldiers” were repelling the enemy. The “regiments” of Whites were beating off the hordes of Reds!

What kind of force was behind the orders of Captain Turkul, with which he held back the Reds? Was it the division? The corps? The regiment? The battalion? Or in the end, the company? Yes, it was the company. Not a complete company but just an “officer’s” only company. Which is to say, perhaps one fifth of the regular one. A courageous company. And in the genesis or in the support of this courage, playing a considerable role was song.

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After a day of fighting, there was expected, as usual, a troubled night ahead. A quiet, warm evening. Road dust covered the battery, which was entering to the German colony in Northern Tavria. Wearied by the July heat and the day’s battle, everyone was silent. Then suddenly in the colony was heard the song, as though it came from behind the wall of the German gardens, as though it was quite close, next to the battery:

“For the Soviet power...

We all will die as one...”

At that time there weren’t “Beryozka”<sup>2</sup> with their trained voices and legs; and an essential thing was missing in that Soviet song—the fervor. On the contrary, one could feel the stiffness, compulsion. Our tiredness disappeared in an instant, and the battery burst out with:

“Into battle we will boldly go,

For the Holy Russia...”

And life, energy, strength and will welled up in this answering song. The Reds

could not bear it, and they fell silent...

---

This heavily-armed struggle is now in the distant past. Love for their Motherland led the White combatants. That love gave rise to epoch-making military songs and marches, which cultivated, fortified and adorned the army. And if the marches reflected the most magnificent parades, the songs, for the most part, brought joy to everyday life. The harmonious outpouring of these everyday songs was widespread.

From the heartiest of the march-song:

“Drozdovtsy marched with firm strides,  
The enemy fled at the onslaught –  
And with the Tri-color Russian flag,  
The regiment was wining Glory...”

Through the tragedy of a battle for the Holy Russia:

“The stars died out above the distant plain,  
There, where the Quiet Don flows—  
There, close to Bataysk, machine-guns are silent,  
But cries and moans are all around...”

Through the commanders’ tears for the corpse of a warrior-child:

“He was a hero, a brave eaglet,  
Blood streamed onto a white lily of the valley,  
At the bloom of his strength he departed this malicious world...  
And, like a baby, the commander wept...”

With regard to songs, beyond the war, in a peaceful circumstances, we encounter a carefree, light-hearted cadet, who, in his free moments, sometimes liked to joke:

“In one hand I hold a glass, hold a glass,  
With the other I clasp a woman’s waist, a woman’s waist—  
Now I’m the Pope and a sultan,  
And a happy lot was doled to me, yes doled to me!”

And, of course, the elements of comedy were not missing, too:

“I’m ready, for such a law, such a law such as this:  
To form a ladies’ squadron,  
Men are trash, men are trash, I spit on them,  
We will force them to bear the children...”<sup>3</sup>

But in our war songs is also the history of Russia: The Napoleonic year of 1812, The First World War, The Civil War and, finally, Gallipoli. The war-songs have dissipated,

have been forgotten... But quick to answer was a patriot Don Kikhote from Taganrog, Mr. A. A. Gairabetov, who as a beardless youth passed through the furnace of the Civil war, and through Gallipoli arrived at the so-called free world. In his declining years he carried out painstaking work—to search for, to gather words and tunes, to restore the military songs. An enormous task! To be sure the world is great! And assuredly the songs are not sung everywhere, or by everyone. Many are forgotten, scattered in the immigrants troubles, but for those which Mr. Gairabetov managed to gather and present to us as “A Collection of Military Songs”, which are worthy of not only our white tribute, but of our deepest gratitude.

Let us remember the white warriors and the Russian military songs. Let us pass them on to our children and grandchildren so they can return them to the homeland, where the Red vermin are trampling all over our past. Even those who were not in the military and those who do not sing should have this “Collection”, as a memory of the past—of all that is dear to us, and from which we all came here.

## Drozdovsky Regiment March

Glorious Drozdovsky Regiment,  
Burdened with heroic duty,  
Marched from fields of Rumania  
To shield the Russian people from the Reds.

General Drozdovsky marched proudly  
Forward with his White regiment.  
As a hero, he firmly believed,  
That he will save his Fatherland.

He believed – the time shall come –  
The people would awake,  
Throw off its heavy burden  
And join volunteers in their epic struggle.

General endured privation  
And many a sleepless night,  
But the battle-hardened hero feared not  
The long and dangerous road ahead.

He knew that Holy Rus' was  
Tired from desperate battles,  
And its fire, as a precious candle,  
Dying down each day.

Drozdovtsy marched with steady strides,  
The enemy fleeing the onslaught of their guns  
And under the Tri-color Russian banner,  
The regiment bled and won to Glory...<sup>1</sup>

# The Dispossessed

Stalin reneges on the promise of the revolution:  
“All land to the peasants!”  
And he launches onslaught on peasants  
through forced farm collectivization.

*Dedicated to the memory of millions of peasants  
dispossessed of land who perished  
during that horrific period in Russian history.*

*But those who are alive should never forget terrible past  
and history would resurrect it in memory of Russian people –  
the true and terrible history.*

*History from which not only to one reader  
the hair would stand on end  
and, having read its terrible pages,  
not only one reader would say:  
“May God rest the souls of His innocent servants.”  
– Orest M. Gladky, “Near Saur’s Grave” (1954)*

## Foreword – Peasants' Plight

The organization of the agricultural *artels*—as they were called in the beginning<sup>1</sup> before the Soviet authorities coined the infamous new name of *kolkhoz*<sup>2</sup>—was proceeding very slowly after the revolution because of peasants resistance. The revolutionary slogan promised “All land to the peasants!” and the peasants expected to hold the land for private farming. The golden dream was short-lived and became nightmare as literally millions on the land died of starvation virtually at the hands of Soviet policy makers.

Before the revolution peasants cultivated the land given to the village community during the emancipation from serfdom in 1861. This land was divided into strips by *mir*<sup>3</sup> for each household in the village along patriarchal lines, which allowed sons to inherit it. By 1918, some households with large families had subdivided their parcels among their sons, who ended up with very small parcels, barely sufficient for family subsistence.

To improve cultivation practices and to increase grain production, from 1905 to 1907 the Russian government allowed peasants to buy and sell both their strips and their lots of land. To provide the legal framework for this, government established land commissions in the provinces, which facilitated the small independent farmers in selling their land distributed by *mir*. The peasantry was encouraged to consolidate strips, to buy land from those who were selling their parcels and moving to the cities and towns to work in the emerging industrial society. Peasants who had a knack for business bought most of this land and became well-to-do peasants who provided a steady and reliable supply of grain for the country.

By 1916, during the war with Germany, the Russian government had started bread rationing in the cities, towns, and hamlets. And in 1917, the Provisional Government had introduced the state monopoly on grain, whereby peasants were ordered to deliver to the government all their surplus of grain at the set price. Rapid devaluation of currency and shortage of goods available for the peasants to buy prompted the illegal but common practice of farmers to protect the fruits of their own labor by hiding a portion of the grain from the authorities. Bartering as a basic form of exchange, foodstuffs for consumer goods, was widespread.

From 1917 to 1918, the land was expropriated from the farming landowners and distributed by *mir* among all households in the village. Since a household might receive land in separated locations, peasants were allowed to continue buying and selling land in order to continue its consolidation.

During the civil war that followed the revolution, the peasants were cultivating the land, which by then they considered their own by absolute right; some they had inherited from their fathers; other they had gained from distribution of the expropriated land. In addition, they were also able to buy land from other peasants. During that time they endured requisitioning of grain by the Reds, Whites, and Greens, all of whom sought it to feed their armies and the general population in the cities, towns, and hamlets held under their control.

As the Bolsheviks sought to enlarge their authority in the country and needed to feed the population, they outlawed private grain trading by the peasants, who had no option but to sell grain at the established price to the government. But the peasants resisted yielding the entirety of their surplus grain to the state at the low prices and continued their practice of hiding portions of the grain, then bartering it on the black market.

Peasants felt betrayed by the revolution and were resentful of the Bolshevik government, whose policies killed incentive to produce larger crops. The subsequent drop in planting, combined with drought in several large grain-producing regions, resulted in the 1921-22 great famine, both in urban areas and the countryside.

The government responded with remedial measures, first by requisitioning grain, the state taking from the farmers all the grain it could place its hands on, then introducing a tax-in-kind, which was a fixed quota owed by the peasants to the government. This latter practice allowed the peasants to again legally sell their marketable surplus, which had an immediate beneficial impact on the availability of grain on the market. This period corresponded to the introduction in 1921 of NEP<sup>4</sup>, that allowed a revival of private trade and small artisan industry as an extraordinary temporary measure to relieve the desperate economic situation throughout the country.

Relaxation of control by the state was short-lived. Rapid national industrialization required foreign machinery, to be purchased by the Soviet government with proceeds from sale of grain abroad. Peasants resisted selling grain to the government because the state-established price was extremely low, thus grain procurement sank below estimates of state planners.

The Bolshevik Party then directed government authorities to employ new and devious tactics to requisition grain from the reluctant peasants. The designation *kulak* was coined to identify the prosperous farmers, who were then declared to be the “enemies of the people” and thereby lost their voting rights. Brigades of Communist Bolshevik Party members composed of workers, soldiers, and sailors were deployed to the villages to requisition, by threats or by force, the hoarded grain from the *kulaks’* barns and hidden caches. In case persuasion would not work, the divide and conquer strategy was expected to do so. They used cunning and deception by splitting the villagers into two opposing groups, instigating class war between the poor and any well-to-do peasants. The confrontation of the Bolshevik regime with the peasantry escalated into a harsh and relentless campaign against the prosperous farmers who owned and cultivated larger tracts of land. The *kulak* festered as an open sore on the body of the Bolshevik doctrine of collectivization and thus demanded disinfection.

This period marked the end of free trade NEP policies. The Soviet government was eager to seize full control of grain production. Collectivization of agriculture had until that time proceeded too slowly on the so-called voluntary basis. Renewed emphasis was placed on enforcement of collectivization. Bolsheviks engaged in eliminating the private farming success by dispossessing the *kulaks* of their land and other property; this brutal process was termed *raskulchivaniye*, and it sent millions of *kulaks* into the forced labor camps<sup>5</sup> in Siberia and other faraway places of the vast Soviet Union.

Special collectivization agents were sent to the villages and farmsteads to hold public meetings, during which the peasants were forced to pass sham resolutions of



the so-called “unanimous” and “voluntary” organization of *kolkhoz*. Those sham meetings were usually held in the school buildings. Since the meetings required the services of a literate person, it was common practice that a teacher was called to serve as a secretary for the meeting.<sup>6</sup> In addition, as a literate person, that teacher was required to read aloud to the hostile peasants the numerous pages of propaganda literature about the policy of collectivization and its “benefits” to the peasants. Also, the teacher was expected to “volunteer” as a literate “aide” to the village agitator-propagandist, termed agitprop, a functionary whose role the Bolshevik Party greatly emphasized.

The teacher was expected to “voluntarily” campaign for the *kolkhoz*, and did so with the same general level of enthusiasm exhibited by farmers who were forced to “voluntarily” enroll in them. A distorted concept of *dobrovolnost*, which meant volunteering, was used. During those times the people cynically and accurately applied the coined phrase “*dobrovolno po prinuzhdeniyu*,” which meant “voluntarily by coercion,” when they were forced to act against their will. It was a perverted concept that was applied in all situations where the Bolshevik Party or the Soviet government wanted to show that the people were doing things voluntarily when the truth behind it all was force.

## Near Saur's Grave

If one ventures along a certain edge of a small mining settlement, a view of the endless steppe will open before his eyes. It begins at his feet and stretches far away to the south, disappearing from sight at a point where the mysterious Saur's Grave rises up the horizon concealing a tale of the Russian history.

North, east and west from there could be seen peaked tops of coal gob piles and coal mine tower shafts. Black cones of coal gob stand silently. They have nothing to tell to our contemporaries – it's the history of our time. Down from these sullen cone-shaped pyramids run shiny threads of rails, where small trains loaded with coal move from time to time.

On the far-away horizon the sky merges with the land, hiding from sight the same endless steppe, which stretches up to the shores of the Azov Sea. Once upon a time wild hordes of the Golden Horde rode upon the steppe, amidst the wild grass, feather grass and thistle, amidst bright wild flowers and dry stalks of the last-year plants, and horsemen of free boundary nomads fought back their raids. Unknown inhabitants of the spacious steppe sacrificed much in the name of their native land and for saving their freedom; and the steppe treasures in its depth the invisible, worn-by-Time graves of heroes. Only Saur's Grave towers above the broad fields reminding of the past...

Many years of the stubborn fight went by, and the steppe transformed from the wide and wild free boundary land into tilled fields, where wheat and sun flowers, vegetables and forage grass grew, manicured by nurturing hands of peasants. Where grew fields of golden wheat, of ever-green clover and Lucerne, and farther, in the low-country, melon fields; and even farther, near a narrow stream arising from no one knew whence, shone brightly lush greenery of vegetable gardens. Along the few and far between dusty roads crept huge creaking araba carts, resembling from far away the moving hills, full of produce harvested by steppe inhabitants.

Tall bell towers and church domes of occasional villages peeped up as colorful pictures from the hollows. Behind them appeared well-sweeps and snow-white cottages with interwoven branch fences. In the twilight, as the day was fading, Saturday bells rang and early Sunday bells re-echoed one another from the small villages, and the blessed sound resounded far away on the steppe...

Not a long time ago the steppe lived, full of life in harmony with vigorous labor. Dwellers' work was hard, but rewarding. People loved their work and the land paid them generously back. They lived not in luxury but with abundance, and shared the fruits of their labor with others...

But a not very long time went by, and the same steppe ceased nourishing its people. Arrived famine. Not because of the whim of the dwellers of the prosperous steppe, but from the arbitrariness of the autocratic rulers... It also happened before – a long time ago, in the cruel historical past – in the terrible years, when the Golden Horde conquered the steppe, drove out its inhabitants, destroyed their dwellings, killed mice and men who refused to obey it. And then, as it is now, were years of hunger... And then,

as now, the exhausted died by the club-law of rulers.

Not so long ago, in the village nested near the mines people prospered by dual labor – in the mines during the winter, and in the fields during the summer. Huge markets gathered there on holidays. The steppe dwellers from different parts and from the most distant villages brought their wares there and returned home with the pockets full of money or with the carts full of city goods. Both steppe dwellers and mine workers flourished.

But in a very short time everything changed. The same endless steppe remained, but it became different; the same mines remained, but they became different. The endless steppe became covered with weeds, as if it wanted to return history to the times of the Golden Horde. The villages became empty, as if their settlers fled from the coming hordes of Batyia. The black coal pyramids of coal gob on the mines became gloomier, as if they were reflecting mourning of the dying past. And people had changed, too.

It was famine... Villages emptied. People died out or were deported to forced labor camps. Mines were becoming crowded with hungry people. Taciturn. Embittered. Ready to work under the ground for a piece of bread. But if there was no work, they were ready to extort the piece of bread from the hands of those who had it. The life grew restless, the way it was at the time of the Tartar's hordes' invasion of the free steppe...

There was no strength to fight and some settlers submissively followed their fate like lambs to slaughter and died. The others – those looking for salvation, only the salvation – ran from homes inhabited for centuries... Only the weak ones remained in their homes. Only those burdened with families continued dying slowly in their native villages. But sometimes even they found their way to salvation. Perhaps it was not always right, not always Christian, and, therefore frightful, but hunger made beasts out of human beings. So it is not up to us to be the judges of those who had to make such dreadful choices because of the rulers' crimes. The people were not criminals. They were not guilty. They did not commit evil of their own will... God is their judge.

Theft – not a crime then. And what about cannibalism? Is it a crime? Flesh is weak. Famine is terrifying. If a man kills another man in defense – a court will clear him of accusation.

We, witnesses of unbearable suffering of our people, should leave judging of the past to God and the honest historians of the second Time of Troubles. We are not strong enough to pronounce an impartial sentence to those who committed "crimes" for the sake of life!..

Not far from Saur's Grave lay the village S. For a long time it had been prosperous, strong in its black earth strength, firm in its Christian spirit, loyal to its customs, hard working, good-hearted, and all forgiving. The life in the village had been humming in the busy harvest time and was filled with tranquility and peace during the long winter rest. The village raved with sincere merriment and steppe's boldness on holidays, was inebriated with the excess of summer time labor and murmured with sounds of happy voices on weekdays.

But now, it was all over – seemingly dead... There is silence. An ominous silence. Dwellers – nowhere to be seen, their cheerful voices and youthful songs nowhere to be heard. And no light – seen in the windows of grayish cottages... There are no roads deeply furrowed by wide peasants' sledge runners, no paths tramped down by solid

peasants' boots... White, sparkling snow that comes down settles during the night without a trace of human footprints. And when very rarely one may encounter footprints – they are feeble, disfigured, distressed. Visible are only crow's tracks, a light hare trot, or a muddling of lacelike fox prints dusted by the bushy tail.

Some light of life still flickers somewhere in the village. Life – barely detected. And it is not life, but – dying. Resigned. Silent. Dying without even despair. It's because life is coming to an end in their native nest. Because behind the fence there would be an immediate death...

Night. Silence. In the clear sky – full moon. Up high – adornment of silver dots of stars. In the frosty calm no life was felt, as if everything was covered with a thick mantle of snow and crust of ice. The village was not asleep – it was dead. Because those who are alive do not fall asleep but die. Because not all who remained alive would wake up next morning. Because those who would not wake up would remain many days crouched on a brick stove or in their wide wooden village beds – there would be no one to bury them. Those who were alive could not change the fate of those already dead. Death fear, hunger and cold reigned there...

Night. Silence. Full moon is shining and silver specks of stars adorn the heavens sparkling with blue lights. On the snowy road three black figures toil somewhere out of the village. They move slowly. One figure – tall, thin and skinny, even in a wide sheepskin coat; the other two – look small, tiny, hardly visible against background of white snow. They toil prompted by their instinct, because there is no road to see. Only their faint memory suggests the way, and the lights of distant mines – those they are eager to reach. But their progress is slowed by unbearable fatigue – as if they carry an incredible weight. And from this weight – weakness. Incredible weakness, which is forcing them to stop every few steps and gather strength for the next few steps.

A quiet night was slowly crawling. The moon hid somewhere. The stars were vanishing in a graying sky. The road left behind was lost beyond the point of no return. The home was left forever...

The travelers met the morning at the edge of another village, where lived half peasants and half mineworkers, where life, though broken and disfigured, still existed. And today, on Sunday, this life was visible from early in the morning. From different directions, from different courts hurried the people – half peasants and half workers. They carried baskets or sacks filled with goods they had grown during the summer in their vegetable gardens. Others – with empty baskets. They all would meet at the market square. Some – to pay for the food with their old clothes or money of no value; the others – to be paid with those things.

Night travelers walk slowly on crooked streets. Nobody notices them. They are in no hurry. They walk in silence, because they are too weak to speak. But then, what to speak about? The children know that asking mother for bread is out of the question – she had no bread. Their mother knows it is a sin to console the hungry with the words. But – to give piece of bread... Where and how could she get it?..

Not a long time ago the market square was noisy, turbulent, screaming, laughing. Not so long ago the cars and sledges were full of produce from the toil of peasant hands. Oxen and horses, cows and calves, pigs and goats, hens, geese, ducks and turkeys created such loud concerts that they could be heard far away from the square. And amidst horses neighing, geese gabbles, pigs squealing, and crowing of irrepressible

roosters, amidst sheep bleating and ducks quacking, the joyful babble of human voices could be heard. Life then was in full swing. Plentiful. Healthy. Life of working people.

But now – there are no carts. No noise. No life. Some are standing with their simple goods, the others walk unhurriedly, asking prices, bargaining, buying, but all this done with no joy of life. There is no spirit, no excitement, not even simple interest. They sell because they need to sell and buy because they need to buy. They haggle over prices, sometimes cruelly, shouting, cursing meanly and fiercely. They trade angrily, with fierce, sometimes blasphemous cursing, as in death agony, as a cry of the sentenced to death.

Slowly the mother and her children walk through the crowd. They eagerly look at pitiable goods of the vendors – women coalminers – who managed to grow beets, pumpkins, tomatoes or cucumbers in their vegetable gardens. They also eagerly look at the men coalminers who took their ration of bread to exchange for milk or for shoes or pants at the flea market. But the exhausted and hungry travelers knew they could not afford this luxury.

They had to go around the crowd that surrounded a man who was selling meat. What kind of meat was it? Was it beef, pork, lamb or maybe it was horse meat? Maybe it was rabbit or hare? Or maybe the unscrupulous vendor was selling his own dog? Maybe... No, no... It is frightful not only to say it, but it was terrible even to think about it... But it did happen – one could not hush the truth... One cannot stop from telling what was happening in those days... Maybe it was... human flesh? Good God, the fear would overcome some people and after thinking over a bargain for a moment they would run for dear life empty-handed... But there were also some daredevils, desperate in despair, so blinded by hunger, that they would buy suspicious “produce.”

Behind this crowd the mother saw a big stone, protruding from the ground like a nearly regular cube. Once it had served as a counter for the hawkers. There they displayed their simple goods, but today it was empty: now no one needed combs and needles, buttons and mirrors, threads or needles for primus-stove. All this was unnecessary now.

The mother walked round the crowd, came to the stone, swept away the fresh snow with her shawl, spread her sheepskin coat over and sat her children down. Then slowly walking away, she mixed with the crowd. She walked further and further away, looking back and making sign of the cross toward her little ones, until she reached the edge of the market square where it was steeply leading toward the mining settlement. There she looked back again, but could not see her little girls any more, as they were mixed with the moving crowd. But the mother signed her daughters again under her warm jacket and quietly went down the road.

The little girls sat for long time on the cold stone looking around with their scared black eyes. They lost their mother from sight at once. The wafer-thin and half-translucent white skin was barely covering their feeble bodies. Only the tiny lips stood out with bloody redness against the deadly white of their faces. Sharpened little noses and coal-black eyes expressed genuine fear and made them look like fledglings fallen from their nest.

They silently waited and waited, looking at the crowd that moved before their eyes. They waited for a long time for their mother to bring them the promised piece of bread... But the crowd, indifferent to anything that didn't concern it, gradually began to

break up. The market was getting empty. The little girls muffled up with their warm shawls and coats kept sitting still and silent on the stone and looked frightened. No one cared about them. No one noticed them. No one looked at them. And no one gave them even a small piece of bread. Only the Death continued to take care of them by blowing a frosty air under their warm clothes. The girls began to cry quietly from cold but kept sitting still on the stone. Streams of tears traced their way down the face, freezing with little drops on their shawls. A soundless crying did not bother occasional by-passers who looked with indifference at the half-frozen and hungry orphans.

Maybe people just did not see those little girls left to their fate? No, they did see them. But they did not dare to give them shelter. They did not dare to take them, because they couldn't feed two more mouths, or because they were afraid of reprisals for helping the kulaks!

A militiaman appeared only in the afternoon. He scornfully looked at the children, roughly grabbed their hands and pulled them down on the ground. He asked them something, but the children could not tell him anything. They were so frightened by this terrible man in the uniform, that they could not even understand what he was asking them about... The militiaman took them by their little hands and led them to an orphanage, overcrowded with poor children, who were just like them – hungry, cold, unfortunate orphans.

In the distance was vaguely seen Saur's Grave, a witness of the terrible days of the Russian history. Around Saur's Grave, razed to the ground – many unknown graves that swallowed up our forefathers who died hero's death or those condemned to death during the time of the Tartars-Mongol yoke. And how many of these unknown graves in our time have swallowed up those who fell fighting for Motherland, or those who allowed themselves to be condemned for extermination?!.. How many of these unknown graves are scattered on the wide rich southern steppes? With time, they will level with the land and only Saur's Grave will preserve the memory of the past. The unwritten present, however, will be scattered on the endless graves of the steppe-toilers...

But those who are alive – should never forget terrible past and present, and history would resurrect it in memory of Russian people – the true and terrible history. History from which not only to one reader the hair would stand on end and, having read its terrible pages, not only one reader would say:

“May God rest the souls of His innocent servants.”

## In the Pale-blue Semi-darkness

Already for several days the late winter morning was beginning as a pale-blue semi-darkness. In the deep silence of the dream-like dawn, now and then was heard the faint, frail voice of Varka from over-the-oven nook:<sup>1</sup> "Mom-m... I want to eat... Mom-m..."

And a no less faint, droning woman's voice answered her, "Now, little one... now... I'm going to the village."

And once again silence came in the pale-blue semi-darkness, which each night thickened into an impenetrable darkness.

In the forgotten and deserted peasant hut there remained only two souls of living people. Are they even alive? Six-year-old Varka lay bundled in rags on over-the-oven nook, almost immobile. If the sun ray had been able to get in here, then it may have been possible to see the dried up little body, with thin, like tissue paper, skin, with an unusually bright purple on her lips. The pale little eyes already did not express anything, did not want anything, they were indifferent towards everything. Even asking to eat was more likely just by habit. Or, maybe, to find out whether her mother was still alive.

On the bench that stood by the window lay Mar'ya, Varka's mother, a woman of about thirty-two or thirty-three. The thick semi-darkness hid her swollen body, which was shiny and colorless. Either never-ending fatigue or painful sluggishness engulfed her whole body, and she slowly and distantly answered the rare calls of her daughter with the same monotone: "At once, little one... at once... I'm going to the village..."

A sort of weight pulled her to the simple bench, and she continued to lie just as motionlessly, with closed eyes out of which tears slowly flowed from time to time. As recently as a few days ago Varka's words tore her heart into pieces. Then she cried, feeling a sharp physical pain in her chest and the bitterness of her tears. She felt all of her weakness and all of her helplessness... But now, maybe, she did not hear Varka's voice. Maybe, neither her reason, nor her maternal instincts could perceive the child's requests, or cries, for help...

Recently Mar'ya was so used to tears, that she did not even feel them on her puffy face. She just poured out all of her final sufferings, all of her last feelings in this world. She no longer had either the fear of the inevitable end, or the gladness for the end of earth's sufferings. Peace of mind came...

From time to time she understood that everything comes to an end, that life should just about be cut short, but the realization of this terrible moment did not worry her completely, it was as if her feelings were deadened.

The pale-blue semi-darkness concealed the suffering faces of the mother and daughter, and the sun's light no longer penetrated into the cold room, as if preparing the expiring lives for eternal darkness.

A blizzard that passed a few days ago covered the windows with huge snowdrifts. And now, through the windowpanes adorned all over by frost designs, the weak bluish light penetrated from somewhere above and dissipated through the big room turning it into a pale-blue semi-darkness.

At first Mar'ya was scared to go out into the street. She thought that the entire hut was covered and she wouldn't have enough strength to open the door. She lay on the bench and tried not to think about anything, not to reminisce about anything, not to care about anything. And time did its part. She forgot about the past, did not think about the present, and of the future, she could not imagine at all. Varka was very far away for her now. As if she's not even her daughter. All of her feelings faded away, even her maternal instincts.

"Mom-m... I want to eat... Mom-m..." suddenly rang out from over-the-stove.

And it caused a pang in her heart, like she felt before her feelings deadened. Mar'ya gathered all her strength, slowly and carefully came down from the bench, and silently began to bend over in the direction of the door.

"Now, little one... now... Here, I'm going to the village..." she answered just as monotone.

The old door squeaked in the frosty little porch doorway, and a bright sunny day revealed itself. Mar'ya went out onto the little snow-covered porch. The snow was drifted by the window. The outbuildings were hidden by a heavy white cloak. The smooth sparkling veil covered the entire village. Only here and there the chimneys were visible, and stubbles of the ridges of peasant village roofs, here and there stuck out peaks of the well-sweeps of wells, and tops of old trees looked like bushes... The village was deserted... Not a track on the freshly fallen snow. Even small animals and birds had not managed to run their light steps along the cold snow.

Barely shifting from foot to foot, Mar'ya quietly trudged through the long ago deserted village, which disappeared below the snow. Maybe only she alone remained with her Varka in this wilderness, she did not know. But she knew that all of the huts she stopped in before were empty. There she sometimes found a dropped slice of bread, dried up and nibbled by mice, sometimes a frozen potato or spilled grains of wheat or barley. She gathered it all carefully and carried it home. In this way she fed her little Varka and herself, until the snow covered the earth with a thick layer. It became harder and harder to make her way through the courtyards and huts blocked by snow, to get into the cellars and tiny rooms. Weakened, she could no longer reach the places where she could, maybe, find something—she was slowly dying, together with her Varka.

Today the light of life suddenly burst within her soul. She heard the tiny voice of her daughter, the voice of her hungry child, and, seizing herself by the arm, gathered all of her depleted strength, to get hold of something, of anything, for her daughter to eat.

It was difficult to walk. Her legs sank into the snowdrifts, and sometimes slid on the ice covering snow surface. Mar'ya frequently fell, lay for long time, but it was like the thought of hungry Varka brought her some strength and she arose and dragged herself along once again. To where?.. She herself did not know. She walked forward towards some sort of nebulous goal. Only sometimes she caught sight of a deserted hut covered by snow. She walked up to it, stood looking, pondering, remembering whose hut it was, and remembering the living people in it, maybe, a conversation with its talkative hostess would come to her, then turned, and just as slowly set out further—it was impossible to reach the hut...

"Maybe there, in the ravine..." flashed, finally, a clear thought into her consciousness, and the little voice of her Varka was heard: "Mom-m... I want to eat... Mom-m..." "Yes, maybe... You just need to get there. There, below, in the ravine. Maybe



protected from the wind, maybe the snow did not cover the huts? Maybe, down there, there is a path to some little hut? And bread, maybe..." Will there be something to eat there? Would Mar'ya at least find a frozen potato?..

The sun is already edging into the west. A thick figure in a sheepskin coat slowly moves along the outskirts of the big village. Sometimes this figure stops and stands for a long time in the same spot. Maybe she is thinking about something, remembering something, maybe resting from the long journey. Sometimes she descends onto the freezing snow and sits immobile on it for long time. Sometimes with a sluggish or tired walk she moves through boundless white space, in which it is already impossible to distinguish anything... Sometimes, finally, she falls into the snowdrifts, slips along the frozen icy field, getting up in utter exhaustion, in order to continue her hard journey... This is Mar'ya—a mother and a woman.

A hut, which had miraculously survived, not covered by snow, attracted her. She carefully descended the hollow in front of the doors, shoved them and found herself in the world of death... Withered, thin people who had turned into frozen corpses, lay in various poses on the floor, on the only iron bed, on the benches spread along the wall.

The feeling of being alive, which had awoken in her earlier, made Mar'ya flinch from this terrible image. The kingdom of death reminded her of the impending future, from which she could no longer escape. Both she and Varka will be just like all the people she had seen before and is seeing now, all the Mitrichas, Alekseichas, Ivanovnas, Kharitonovnas, all the little Sashas, Mashas, Vanyas and Styepas... Maybe for the last time her legs obeyed her. She darted, running, out of the house...

The dark of the overcast wintry sky deepened. The rising Eastern wind seized powdery snow from drifts and spiraled it high, then, low, whirling and wriggling, blowing it every which way, up, down, even sideways. The howling wind scattered the snow over the rough and uneven ground. In bitter gusts it drove piercing snowflakes against every surface until they came to rest somewhere within the secluded little place, to rest frozen there till spring. The icy Eastern wind blasted into an unknown hazy distance. The night and the blizzard engulfed the land; the frost grew colder.

Mar'ya reached the ravine. Being tired, she lay down on its edge. In her hands were a few, found somewhere, crusts of bread – dried up and frozen, which she carefully was taking to her Varka. The cold snow felt to her like her bench, on which she would lie for days on end. She lay down for a bit, warmed herself in her sheepskin coat and went to sleep unwittingly... Forever...

Varka lay over-the-oven nook motionless all day. Sometimes in the silence of the deserted hut her sad, slow, frail little voice was heard, "Mom-m.... I want to eat... Mom-m..."

The frost became colder. The blizzard raged upon the spaciousness of the fields, above the village covered in snow... The pale-blue semi-darkness gave way long ago to the impenetrable darkness, and the quiet breathing of little Varka became inaudible...

And not a single other living soul remained in the huge village. The last lives died out in the freezing violent night. Neither the silent breathing of a mother and daughter nor their infrequent words "Mom-m.... I want to eat... Mom-m..." and "Now, little one... Now... I'm going to the village..." were heard in the pale-blue semi-darkness.

So began the "happy" collective farms life a quarter century ago in the beginning of the 1930s in the Soviet Union.



## Meeting on the Farmstead

During the snowy winter of 1930 I was a teacher in a village school on the farmstead "Proletarskaya Volya."<sup>1</sup> One morning when I was in the classroom teaching, a sleigh arrived with the *tovarishch*<sup>2</sup> from the Communist Party district office. He ordered me to stop teaching, to dismiss the pupils, and to send them to call all the farmsteaders for a meeting in the school classroom.

For me it was a déjà vu scenario that I had experienced not long ago when I was teaching in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka, and it was repeating again at this small farmstead. I had no choice—I had to obey the district authorities if I wanted to keep my position as a teacher.

Everywhere in the countryside it was a common practice to hold meetings organized by the Bolshevik Party district offices in the schools. The teacher, as a literate person, was expected to serve as a secretary and to record the minutes of the meetings, as well as to read the farmers the cheap propaganda pamphlets about the good things that collectivization would bring them. In addition the teacher was forced to "volunteer" to perform a function of the village agitprop,<sup>3</sup> about which at that time the Bolshevik Party talked a lot. Yes, the village teachers were expected to "voluntarily" campaign for the *kolkhoz* and they were doing it with the same fervor as the farmers who were forced to "voluntarily" enroll in them.

The concept of "*dobrovolno*," which meant "voluntarily," was used everywhere, and people got used to saying a phrase "*dobrovolno po prinuzhdeniyu*" that meant "voluntarily by coercion." It was a perverted concept, which was applied in all situations where the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government wanted to show that the people were voluntarily doing things they really didn't want to do.

Since the beginning of the campaign for collectivization, the farmers had resisted the idea of organizing the agricultural artels. In the winter of 1930 the impatient Stalin issued an order that all agriculture had to become organized in the collective farms at any cost. All over the country collectivization agents were dispatched from the Bolshevik Party district offices to hold public meetings in the villages and farmsteads. During those meetings the farmers were expected to pass resolutions about the voluntary organization of collective artels, for which the infamous new name of *kolkhoz* was invented.

It was this kind of meeting that had to be held on our small farmstead and the district collectivization agent wanted to be sure that all farmers would attend. He stood near the classroom door and ordered each pupil to call on all their neighbors and tell them to come immediately to school for a meeting. With happy shouting the children ran out of school and on their way home they announced to the inhabitants:

"*Dyadya!*"<sup>4</sup>

"*Tyetya!*"<sup>5</sup>

"Go to the meeting!"

"Go to school!"

The news about the arrival of the comrade from a district office spread quickly on the farmstead and, being curious about the news he had to tell, most of the peasants were already on their way to school. At first, the classroom filled with a small audience of local peasants. Later, it filled to capacity with those arriving from the two other neighboring farmsteads.

A chairman of the meeting—who, as usual, was the farmstead representative—and the comrade from the district office—who was a district collectivization agent—pompously accommodated themselves at the teacher's desk. I placed one of the students' desks sideways near the window and squeezed myself onto the narrow seat ready to take the minutes of the meeting. The chairman opened the meeting by introducing the comrade district collectivization agent who was sent from a district office to make a speech about the organization of the *kolkhoz* and to ensure that the farmers would "voluntarily" vote for it.

The comrade district collectivization agent started his speech by praising the advantages of working in the *kolkhoz*, how to organize it, and about the happiness the peasants could find by working together in the collective farm. But most of all, he was trying to intimidate the farmsteaders and to confuse them. On one side, he was telling them that the membership in the *kolkhoz* was voluntary; then, on the other side, he was implying, "If you try not to volunteer, we, the Bolshevik Party, will show you...the consequences..."

When he finished his speech and sat down, the farmstead representative got up and asked, "Well, citizens-*muzhichky*,<sup>6</sup> do you have any questions?" The farmsteaders were silent. He repeated the question several times, but the audience was silent. Then he tried another question, "Maybe somebody doesn't understand something?" Not one sound in reply. The farmstead representative tried another approach, "Maybe we will wait for a while. Maybe someone will think about some question..." In the classroom was such silence that one could not even hear the breathing of the people packed in the classroom—some sitting and some standing where they could find a spot.

"That's that, citizens; then you all understand about what comrade from the district told you," concluded the farmstead representative, embarrassed by the silence of the audience. Then he added, "This, of course, could be difficult right away. Well, we will wait for a while. You better try to think about it, citizens-*muzhichky*..." And he sat down to consult in a whisper with the district collectivization agent.

After a short consultation he got up and asked again, "Maybe someone would like to make some comments about the speech and we will leave the questions for later?" The farmsteaders had their heads down, looking at the floor. After a long second consultation, the farmstead representative got up and asked, "If you don't ask any questions, does it mean that you have understood everything?" The silence persisted. It seemed that in the room there were only two people, the farmstead representative and the comrade from the district office, who from time to time consulted with each other about the stubborn silence of the farmsteaders.

The farmstead representative got up again and made the concluding statement, "That's it, citizens-*muzhichky*! Well, if you understand everything and don't have any questions, it means we will organize the *kolkhoz*!"

The farmsteaders began to slowly raise their lowered heads and to look at each other, but not one word or a sound was heard. Their faces showed obvious tension; their

eyes showed an inner concentration, and their heavy breathing had broken the silence reigning for a long time in the room. But no one was talking.

The farmstead representative continued to talk slowly, "Well, citizens-*muzhychky*, how can I say it so that you would understand this? If it is a common consent, then the Soviet authorities, of course, welcome it. But if you are against it..." The district collectivization agent did not allow him to finish the sentence by knocking with his fingers on the farmstead representative's back. As the farmstead representative had bent down to listen to the district collectivization agent, in one of the last rows someone's cane fell on the floor making a loud noise. All turned their heads toward the back of the room, but the one who disturbed the silence left the cane lying on the floor.

The farmstead representative again addressed the audience, "Well then, citizens-*muzhychky*, should we write that all of you are for the *kolkhoz*?"

The timid voice of the man in the last row, the one whose cane had fallen on the floor, broke the growing tension in the room, "What's the need to write? These *kolkhoz* are by the order from the authorities..." The audience broke the silence and a low murmur filled the room.

Almost happy to hear the voice of the muzhyk, the district collectivization agent got up and asked in a stern voice, "So, comrades farmers, that's how you all think?"

The same timid voice answered, "Why do you ask us? If these *kolkhoz* are by the order from the authorities, why ask us?"

The farmstead representative hurried to explain the situation in plain words, "You see, citizens-*muzhychky*, this act is meant to be voluntary...it means...that's to say, voluntary by you, citizens-*muzhychky*...it's, to say, that it is for your own discretion..."

The man with the timid voice was silent; he didn't dare answer again. The animation in the room ceased. Everybody understood that the "voluntary" act was such that one could not escape from it, like one cannot escape from death, want it or not; either way one had to perish. And with their silence the farmsteaders were trying to prolong the moment when they had to perish. The silence continued. Only the heavy breathing of the people sounded like a gasping breath of a huge wounded animal. The farmstead representative, who was chairman of the meeting, didn't know what to do next.

The district collectivization agent took over the meeting again and he began to convince the peasants, "Citizen-farmers, the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government are constantly showing their care for your welfare and they want that you, all farmers, should live well like the town-folks; they want that 'in every farmers cottage shall shine the electric light bulb of Illich.'<sup>7</sup> They want to make your work easier with the use of big agricultural machinery, which only *kolkhoz* could purchase, and which you, small individual farmers would never be able to buy. Let's take an example, who among you could purchase a tractor today?

He made a long pause to allow the farmers to answer that question, but all were silent and he answered it himself, "Nobody—it's clear. But, if you are in the *kolkhoz*, you will have a tractor. And if you have a tractor, your work would be much easier than your work now. And in general your life would be much better because there will be neither poor, nor rich, because everything will be distributed according to your work. Each will receive as much as he has contributed of his labor to the common *kolkhoz* workload. In other words, everything will be done with justice and fairness. Now, think well about

your life, think about how much the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government care about you..."

"What do you mean, citizen-comrade?" the farmsteader from the last row couldn't resist. "Who are we, according to you, are we some kind of children, or maybe crippled? Why does the party and the government have to provide care for us? Like we don't know when to sow the fields and when to harvest? Everything we do, citizen-comrade, goes according to the rules—in the spring we sow the fields; in the summer, we make hay; in the fall, we harvest.

And about not having an electric 'light bulb of Illich,' we are better without it, earlier to bed, earlier to rise, right on time to go to the fields like it should be done by the true farmsteader... As for the tractor, it's the same. Give us, you know, not your care, but our freedom; then even the tractor will come out by itself. What do you think, citizen-comrade, that we muzhyks don't understand the machine? Do you think that all of us muzhyks are stupid? Do you really think that? Ask any one of us farmsteaders who would refuse the machine. All would buy it...but...we are afraid of authorities...because if one could afford to buy a tractor, they would consider him to be the *kulak*.<sup>8</sup> You know, citizen comrade, with the horse it is safer, I mean, on one's mind there is no worry about being deported, you know where..."

The farmsteader stopped for a short while to take a breath and then continued with more conviction, "And about the justice I can tell you, too... You, town-dwellers, maybe don't recognize God, but we, the farmers, think otherwise. There is nobody except God who could give just and fair reward for our farmer's labor. How one treats the soil, so the soil returns to him. If one looks after it well, his threshing floor will be full of grain. If one just pecks with a wooden or small plough, don't expect much reward for it, because God sees everything."

The farmsteaders were listening silently to every word and many were nodding their heads in approval of what muzhyk from one of the last rows in the room was telling. And he didn't stop; he continued to pour out the grievances that he had kept inside for a long time, "As for the human justice and fairness, we know all about it. We were promised many things during the revolution. And now, what has happened to all of them? And telling us that *kolkhoz* is voluntary, this we understand, too—they are ordered by the authorities, and there is no need to ask muzhyks about it. Drive us as a herd into it, because you have the power. We will labor there, too... What else can we do?" His voice broke off as he pronounced his last words and he hopelessly put down his head.

The farmsteaders became excited—all eyes were on the one who had spelled out what was on their minds. They began to express their approval and to tell each other that they agreed with everything their farmstead-neighbor dared to say. They almost forgot about the two officials sitting at the teacher's desk.

While this outpouring of approval was going on, the district collectivization agent was talking with animation to the farmstead representative. Although the farmsteaders could not hear his arguments, one by one they figured out from his gestures that something was not right, and the room fell again into a tense silence, interrupted occasionally by someone's heavy and deep sigh.

Several agonizing minutes went by in this silence until the comrade district collectivization agent got up and addressed the meeting again, "Citizen-farmers, here farmsteader Yepifanov substantially spoke against the Bolshevik Party and against the

Soviet government. He himself doesn't want to become a member of *kolkhoz* and by his speech he was agitating the other farmsteaders to follow his example. He was trying to sway from volunteering those who came here with a strong intention to immediately organize the *kolkhoz* and become members of the collective farm where they would labor together with other farmers.

I just found out from the farmstead representative some compromising facts about farmsteader Yepifanov. Although he himself is not a *kulak*, he keeps company with some of them. His ideas make one think that one of them speaks with his voice. And this 'someone' is a *kulak* who is probably hiding among you; he is the real enemy of the Soviet government and of the Bolshevik Party.

We cannot tolerate this, and we certainly will investigate this. We will find out by any means who among you is conducting anti-Soviet propaganda. You should understand very well that all that citizen Yepifanov said here, all of it is directed against the Soviet authorities and against the Bolshevik Party. And I am warning you, such persons will receive severe punishment for their hostile activities.

Remember that from now on, after this meeting *podkulachnyky*,<sup>9</sup> like Yepifanov, should reconsider what they say, if they don't want to find themselves together with the *kulaks* somewhere far away from this farmstead. The Bolshevik Party will not tolerate private farms. The Bolshevik Party will not tolerate small capitalists in the village because they will pull the rest of the country toward capitalism. This you should understand yourself. For this reason you should vote now. If you are for socialism, then you should vote for the *kolkhoz*. If you are for the private farms, it means you are for capitalism."

Then he turned toward the farmstead representative and ordered, "Comrade Chairman, let's vote!"

The farmstead representative got up and tried his best to explain to the farmsteaders what they would be voting for and against today, "Well, citizens-*muzhychky*, just now comrade from the district office told you everything exactly. Now then, I think...because...I mean...to make it more understandable...to say it our way, our peasants' way...so it will be little bit more clearer...now then, if one raises a hand he will be for the Soviet government. It means that he should not expect anything bad from the government, because he is its friend. But, if one does not raise a hand, he is against the Soviet government. It means he is its enemy, and he shall blame himself if something bad happens to him. Well then, citizens *muzhychky*, now we all will vote. You ought to raise your hands...we will all raise our hands... That means that nothing bad shall happen to you, to all of us... Do you understand, citizens-*muzhychky*?"

The farmsteaders were silent.

"Well then, I mean, I am voting," stated farmstead representative raising his hand. "Who is for the Soviet government, I mean, for *kolkhoz*? Raise your hands! Hurry up now! Raise your hands! Come on, *muzhychky*, raise your hands!"

Slowly and hesitantly the hands began to rise, but all heads were down. Everyone was afraid to look at his neighbor, like they were all committing some kind of hideous crime that each one wanted to hide from the others...

Although not all raised their hands, the resolution for organizing *kolkhoz* was declared as being accepted unanimously. But the report that was written by me, the secretary of the meeting, contained too many details. I was ordered to rewrite it as it

was dictated by the district collectivization agent who was responsible for the results. In the final polished report the comments by the farmsteadier Yepifanov were not mentioned; nor were the openly expressed or implied threats by the district collectivization agent, nor the fear-implying explanations and constant prodding by the farmstead representative. At the end of the report I was ordered to write: "*Kolkhoz* was organized unanimously voluntarily."

The district collectivization agent departed for the district in a wonderful mood.



## An Uninvited Guest

It was a summer day. Granovsky, principal of a village school, was sitting in an empty teachers' room and carefully sorted out flowers, herbs and leaves preparing a herbarium for the next school year. Bottles and jars with preserved in alcohol specimens of amphibians stood right there on the table. On the walls hung special cases skillfully made by labor of love were collections of the insect pests; there were stuffed birds and small field animals and a tank with little fish stood in the corner between the windows. The whole life of the young teacher was devoted to his school.

Midsummer afternoon silence was interrupted by the steps of a stranger and the knock at the door. "Come in, shouted the teacher with annoyance." The door opened and Granovsky saw a stranger in a leather jacket. "Could it be for my soul?" he thought but, suppressing his nervousness, he responded in a firm voice to the greetings and asked how he could help. The stranger sat down on the chair in front of Granovsky.

"You know that government had began the collectivization, which is a high priority for the Bolshevik party. In your village kulaks don't want to join the kolkhoz and are instigating other peasants not to join. We need to find out who is causing peasants' unrest. As a teacher you are in an excellent position to find out from children in school what they hear at home; also it would be easy for you in your daily contact with the peasants to hear their opinions and to report the information to GPU."<sup>1</sup>

Disguising his indignation, anger and resentment, the teacher explained to the stranger that he was not capable of performing such kind of a job, that school was all his life, that his job was to teach children.

"But it is so easy..."

"No, no, no... Don't even try to persuade me..."

"You don't want to help our government?"

"I help enough the government by working as a teacher... It seems to me..."

"Nobody will even know your name," continued the stranger. "And finally, you will be paid for it..."

"No, I don't want to do it. What I have is enough for me."

"Think about it, I can wait..."

"I can't and I don't want to do it."

"I still advise you to think about it... Here is my address," the stranger handed him an envelope with written address and a postage stamp on it.

The teacher stood silently in front of uninvited guest—his hands behind his back. Seeing that Granovsky didn't want to take the envelope, the stranger put it on the table and in a threatening tone said, "I think you are a little overreacting now... My address may come in handy to you..." After bidding farewell, he left.

Granovsky took the envelope at once and, without reading what was written, he burned it. The same day he got a dismissal from a district department of popular education and in a few days left the village, so that he would never meet the stranger who had disturbed his summer peace.



## The Dispossessed

In trying to find somewhere to work, I traveled from Novosibirsk in Siberia to Taganrog on the Azov Sea, where I had an almost tragic outcome to my attempts to look for employment, and then to Caucasus—back and forth through my motherland that for me became a step motherland. I lost the count of how many places I went without success. Finally, I returned to my blessed Ukraine to try my luck once more after many vain attempts! I decided to settle down in the Donetsk region not far from the coalmining hamlet of Snyezhnoye where my wife and daughter lived.

Knowing that there was a shortage of teachers qualified to teach in Ukrainian, I specifically sought employment in the village school. To my surprise, thank God, at last I succeeded—they hired me on the spot. Probably, it was not easy to find a teacher for this godforsaken place because when I applied for a position as a teacher, they didn't even ask for documents about my education or professional credentials; not one question about where I had worked before; nor did they ask about my social-political background, as was usually done in all other places!

The small village school where I was assigned to teach and live was situated on top of a hill in the former landowner's house, which was surrounded by an old apple tree orchard. It was really a cottage, but larger than other cottages on the farmstead. The outer walls were whitewashed and the small windows had green shutters.

At the bottom of the hill, along the road leading to the village called Bolshoye Kryepinskoye, was the farmstead comprised of thirty-five scattered whitewashed peasants' cottages with thatched roofs and bright-colored shutters. The farmstead belonged to the district of Bolshoye Kryepinskoye of the Donetsk region, and the Soviet authorities had quite recently renamed it Proletarskaya Volya or Proletarian Freedom—a name that was completely inappropriate. In fact, it was a mockery to call it by that name because there was not even one really poor peasant and absolutely no proletarians lived there.

From the time I arrived there at the beginning of the school year and to the beginning of winter, I got to know almost everybody who lived in those cottages; or, more truthfully speaking, in all cottages but one. That cottage stood apart from the others. Its tall gates were always bolted and wicket gate locked. I never saw even the shutters being opened in that cottage. One time when I showed some interest in it, the farmsteaders told me secretly that it belonged to the *raskulachenny*—the dispossessed.<sup>1</sup> From the way I was told about it, I felt that the dispossessed were like lepers—one shouldn't have contact with them—one could become "contaminated" and be condemned like them. No one spoke openly to me of this; no one warned me. It was my intuition acquired from the experience I had living in those difficult times.

It was almost midnight. I knew that at this hour everyone at the farmstead was asleep. Only I was pacing the room from corner to corner, alone with my thoughts, far away from the school, from the farmstead, and from everything else that surrounded me here. My thoughts were far, far away from the farmstead, from the dispossessed...

My thoughts were with my family, with whom until now I hadn't dared to correspond, being afraid to "contaminate" them by being an outlaw... I felt almost like the dispossessed myself... Yes, dispossessed of all that was dear to me.

The worst part of my ordeal had ended only recently. And now I was in a warm room, while outside the walls there was hard December frost. Every now and then I could hear the crackling of tree branches on the old apple trees remaining in the orchard of the evicted landowner. No matter that my room had an earth floor; that the only table had but three legs and must always stand against the wall so it wouldn't fall down; that the only chair was tied in several places with cord and creaked when I sat down on it; that instead of a bed I had an old door raised on brick supports instead of legs; and that instead of a mattress there were ordinary sacks filled with straw. And no matter that on the kitchen stove I had a rusty old tin teapot, and hanging on the wall a common kerosene lamp. But I was free! And I had hope that soon the hour would come when I could once more see those dear to my heart...

I continued pacing the room with my thoughts far, far away from the farmstead, somewhere in the snowy fields where the slag heaps were piled up in high black terricones, where in the mines work never stopped, even at night. There, in a small hamlet of Snyezhnoye, adjacent to the coal mine, were my loved ones, my dear and near ones, my wife and my small daughter. My tormented heart was longing for them...

In the silence of the night I could not hear a sound from the farmstead; only the frost made its presence felt. I knew that nobody could come at that hour and disturb my peace. My peace? No, my solitude. But, hark! What was that? Someone was creeping about. I could clearly hear a creak of careful steps in the orchard. Who could it be? Who could be coming to see me at that late hour? And why was "someone" so careful about creeping through the snow?

Then I heard a careful knock on my small window. I went into the hall and opened the door without asking who it was. If it was a good person, he would do me no harm. If it was somebody with bad intentions, he could also come at daytime, or now break down the door, and, in any case, I had no means to defend myself...

As I opened the door, a woman wrapped in a warm shawl and wearing a huge *kozhuKh* with a turned up collar entered swiftly. When she uncovered her face, I realized that I had never seen her on the farmstead before.

"I came to you," said the woman, who appeared apologetic and confused and was talking in short phrases pausing between them, "You see... I have received a letter... From my husband... I am illiterate..." And she handed me a small postcard covered with many postal seals.

I asked her to sit down. On the postcard were several writings: "*Provereno*," which meant it was passed by the censor. On the stamp the seal was from the town of Kyem<sup>2</sup> in Siberia. So it became clear to me that this was the woman who lived in the cottage that stood alone apart from the others; that she was one of the dispossessed, who was looked upon and avoided as a leper by all the farmsteaders. They were not only afraid to speak to her, but also even to see her, although on the farmstead almost all were interrelated. And for that reason she remained shut up in her cottage because she knew how dangerous it was for anyone to have contact with her.

I turned the postcard to another side. There was some clumsy writing in large letters and in the middle of it was a water spot that made the letters run. The woman

explained, "I cried...maybe now you can't make sense of it...you know, that's from my husband..."

"Don't you worry, I will decipher it," I comforted her.

Then leaning on the windowsill, because I had no other chair to sit in, I began to read what was written half in Russian and half in Ukrainian: "Dear ones, I am working up to my knees in a swamp. We cut the trees. I lost all of my teeth. Send me garlic or onions." There was no room left to write the usual peasant's greetings. Maybe he was not even thinking about it.

The woman's eyes had filled with tears that glittered with the rainbow colors reflecting the light of the kerosene lamp. Those were transparent tears, but I knew how bitter they could be...

"I want to write to him, but I don't know how...I am illiterate," she told me.

"Let me write it for you," I offered.

"But aren't you afraid? You know, we are *raskulchyenny*," she warned me.

"Who would know about it?" I asked her.

"God forbid, I shall not tell anyone!" she answered hurriedly.

"I didn't think about you," I told her, "I was wondering if anyone saw you coming here."

"No! No! I was very careful. That's why I came so late at night when all are asleep. I saw the light in your window..." The poor woman tried to reassure me. And she added, "I want to send him a small parcel..."

"Have you enough to eat yourself?" I asked.

"God is merciful, we are not dying of hunger so far."

"Well, you get it ready and I will help you with the parcel as well," I promised her. "In the meantime, tell me what to write to your husband."

The woman began to tell me the many things she wanted to say to this dearest person. And I did my best to put it in as few words as possible—all that she wanted to tell her dear one. The letter was quickly finished. The woman got up and began to pull out presents from her pockets to pay me for my work. They were some kind of flat cakes made from coarsely ground wheat grain.

"They are not bad...They taste good...we bake them in the ashes...because we are afraid to have fire in the stove...they are really tasty!" she said with reassurance.

"No! No!" I refused and with difficulty persuaded her to take them back.

The unexpected night visitor went away as quietly as she came. And my thoughts returned to agitate me. My wound had opened up again and I felt sharp pain in my heart. The sleepless night awaiting me did not frighten me. I was finding a consolation in my torment.

A few nights later—when the farmstead was already in deep sleep and only I, as usual, was pacing the room and my thoughts were far, far away from everything that was around me at that late hour—again someone tapped in the same cautious way on my little window. I understood that it was the dispossessed woman. Yes, it was she. This time she brought a small parcel in which she was sending her husband garlic, warm underwear, and some kind of herbs unknown to me. I wrote the address on the parcel, the woman thanked me and quickly went away. She knew very well that if somebody had seen her coming here, I could pay for it with my liberty the same way as her husband. After this visit I didn't see her anymore for several weeks.

One day I was returning from a daily stroll and stopped near the farmstead representative's cottage, where as usual farmsteaders were gathered. They were waiting for him to return from a district office to find out all the news. I listened to the farmsteaders who were discussing the burning topic in those days "collectivization."<sup>3</sup> Suddenly somebody pronounced, "Tymokha<sup>4</sup> is coming!"

All turned their heads in the direction of the road where at the beginning of the farmstead someone was coming. He was walking in an uneven gait, staggering along the way, making one big step, then stopping, and then continuing the jerky walk. He carried a long stick with which he seemed to measure the road in front of him. When he reached the cottage of the dispossessed, he stopped, turned himself toward it, raised his stick and threatened somebody invisible, then continued to walk toward us.

When he came closer, the farmsteaders got silent. All their attention was now on this man. At that moment I realized that he was a stranger whom I never saw before in the farmstead. He was wearing a half-length sheepskin coat, high hunting boots, and on his head, an old sheepskin hat. He was not old yet, although his face was covered with fine wrinkles, and coarse gray hair was sticking out from his long mustache.

When he came close to the crowd, it seemed that he didn't intend to stop. But then he seemed to change his mind and said with a smile, "Hul-lo, *muzhychky*!"<sup>5</sup>

"Hullo, hullo, Tymofyey Terentyevich!" answered the farmsteaders, vying with each other.

One of them asked, "Are you just returning from a district office, Tymofyey Terentyevich?"

Because of the respectful way the farmsteaders were addressing this man, I understood that he was not an ordinary muzhyk but one who knew what was going on in the farmstead and maybe in a district office.

Meanwhile Tymokha wasn't hurrying in answering the question. Instead he dropped a derisive hint to the crowd, "Well-well-well, *kolchozniki*,<sup>6</sup> are you discussing the dispossessed cottage?"

The farmsteaders answered in tune with each other, "What about the cottage?"

"It's the folks who live there!" said one.

"Maybe they are dead from hunger by now!" said another.

"Or frozen to death!" added the third one. "You see, there is no smoke from the chimney to be seen day or night."

Tymokha listened to them with an ironic expression on his face, then ridiculed them profusely, "How clever! They are de-e-ad!" He mocked their words.

The farmsteaders listened to Tymokha in silence. I understood that they were afraid to say the wrong things to him.

"Ha-ha-ha!" he laughed and stated, "They will outlive you all! What kind of tales are you telling me about the dispossessed, you cranks? De-e-ad! Those folks? H-ha-ha! You don't know what Tymokha knows! Their chimney is feeding them, you nitwits! It is like in the old times. One lived, and the other lived till he had food; one barely moved his legs, and the other rode on his back! The people were stupid, didn't know any better. Even today not too many clever ones could be found among you. You are sorry for the dispossessed! You, ignorant folks! You haven't seen enough evil in this world! The time has come now to become somebody, but you want to remain the muck worms!"

The farmsteaders still listened, as he continued to preach to them, "Kulaks will

die anyway. We will see to it!" And Tymokha raised his cane again and made a threatening gesture in the direction of the dispossessed cottage. "Remember, it's me, Tymokha, who is telling you this. Because kulak is the first enemy of muzhyk. And you slobber about them! *Mu-u-zhy-y-ky!*" He spoke to them this time with derision about their political ignorance. And Tymokha mockingly imitated them by ridiculing one more time, "It's the folks who live there!.. Maybe dead from hunger by now!" And then he added, "Maybe you start sniveling now like women!"

After a short pause he continued, but this time hammering each word distinctly, "You don't know what Tymokha knows. They have enough to guzzle for as long as they live." Then he added with a grin on his face, "But their business is closed now! Tomorrow it will come out where kulaks are hiding their wheat. They will get their wheat!.. U-u-uh! And kulak's children! They will get what they deserve!" Then he cursed.

The farmsteaders stood silent. Tymokha's words reminded them that what would happen tomorrow to the dispossessed could happen to each one of them—because none of them on this farmstead was really poor. When the district authorities ordered to collect the so-called "excess" of grain from all peasants, all of them had hidden their grain, as much and wherever they could.

Tymokha cursed several times, changing with gusto swearing words while threatening again with his raised stick toward the dispossessed cottage. Then, without saluting, he walked toward the farmstead where he lived.

When he walked by me, I smelled vodka on his breath. The farmsteaders told me that he was never completely sober. But he was a very good master—all brick stoves in the neighboring villages and farmsteads were made with his hands. But I couldn't understand his threatening toward the dispossessed cottage and the puzzling comments of the farmsteaders, spoken intermittently.

"Tymokha doesn't throw his words on the wind!"

"Yes, he had his hands in that brick stove..."

"Sure, muzhyks, a peasant's stove is a very large construction!"

"If Tymokha talks about wheat, it means that he knows something about it!"

"Y-a-h,... there will be a search."

"If they search, they will find it!"

The following day was Christmas Eve. But, although the farmsteaders were religious, the earthly events of those years moved them farther away from God. And maybe because of that in those troubled days, Christmas holidays were beginning with a general feeling of uneasiness and vague gloomy presentiment of a nearing inevitable misfortune. Though in every cottage there were preparations according to all Orthodox traditions, the approaching big holiday was not felt as usual by the farmsteaders.

That morning, during school hours, my pupils suddenly turned their heads toward the windows, and we saw a sled driving up to the front door of the schoolhouse. The overdriven horses stopped, emitting puffs of steam from their noses. In a few moments the doors were flung open and a man all covered with snow appeared on the threshold and asked me, "Are you the teacher?"

"Yes, I am the teacher," I answered.

"Dismiss the pupils!" he ordered me. "Come with me to the farmstead!"

"Very well," I answered, knowing that to argue with the authorities was senseless. Once, when I was working in another village, I complained and asked my

inspector in the Narobras<sup>7</sup> office what to do in the cases when someone from the Soviet authorities came to me and asked me to close the school because they needed to conduct a meeting. His answer was very cumbersome and unclear, "As you know, dear, when the comrades tell you to do something...Time is now like this...you should try to accommodate all this at your place...I really cannot help you. There is no universal answer to this problem, each situation is different...Dialectically to say it...it depends on who, how, and for what reason..."

From his answer I understood that the inspector had no power to prevent the use of the school building, or the services of the teachers from the stream of agents empowered by the Soviet authorities. Therefore, I obeyed.

That whole day I spent in the neighboring farmsteads, sometimes acting as a secretary for the meeting conducted by the District Collectivization agent or reading to the farmsteaders propaganda literature about the virtues of the kolkhoz.<sup>8</sup>

It was getting dark when we returned to our farmstead. The snowstorm that started in the afternoon was now raging with all its might. The northeasterly wind was blowing pungent snow in our faces. We all were glad to finally get to a warm place, although I knew that my room remained without heating the whole day. One would think that in such weather nobody would drive to this place. But I was wrong.

Our sleds stopped near the farmstead representative's cottage where we almost bumped into the light sleigh that had just arrived with some new visitors. From underneath a white lump of snow one man emerged, followed by another. The first jumped down from the sled, shook the snow from his long sheepskin coat, cursed at the weather, and turned down his high fur collar, disclosing the uniform cap of a GPU agent.

"Well, why are you standing there?" he asked the other one, who appeared to be just an ordinary driver.

Then he shouted to all of us, "Let's go in and get warm!" And he hurriedly ran into the cottage of the farmstead representative. It was obvious that it wasn't the first time he had been here and that he knew who lived in that cottage.

The District Collectivization agent followed the GPU agent into the cottage and I had to follow them, too, as there was still work for me to do. I had to write a polished record of the proceedings of the peasants' meetings by getting rid of all the "useless" negative details that, according to the District Collectivization agent, "were of no interest" to the Bolshevik Party masters.

As we entered the room, the GPU agent was standing near the stove rubbing his frozen hands. He recognized the District Collectivization agent and told him, "Tonight we will evict the Morozovs." I recognized the name. I had written it on the letter and on the parcel that was to be mailed to faraway Kyem.

"Morozovs? Which Morozovs?" asked the farmstead representative in a surprised voice.

"Those dispossessed whose muzhyk was sent up north. His wife is still here," the GPU agent replied.

"But she has small children and an old mother," remarked the farmstead representative cautiously.

"That's not our business!" the GPU agent answered sharply.

"It's long overdue," commented the district collectivization agent and added, "Look how they make themselves at home here! Degenerate kulaks! They are only



making trouble influencing the rest of the farmsteaders. That's why muzhyks are fussing about and don't want to go into kolkhoz."

"Certainly, it's kulaks' propaganda! It is clear, they should have been removed a long time ago!" remarked the GPU agent and then added, addressing the farmstead representative, "We ought to warm up after that cold journey. Haven't you any vodka?"

"Of course, we have!" answered the farmstead representative hurriedly. "For such an occasion we always keep in reserve all that is necessary! We know very well that in this cold winter only vodka could warm you up! Hey, *baba*,"<sup>9</sup> he called bossingly his wife, "hurry up! Don't dawdle up there, put everything on the table at once!"

A one-liter bottle of vodka immediately appeared on the table. The wife of the farmstead representative was used to entertaining such important guests and hurried up with a piece of salted lard, sauerkraut, pickles, and homemade bread. All sat at the table and had a glassful of vodka followed by a light repast. But the GPU agent didn't allow them to indulge in drinking more and ordered in an authoritative manner, "That's enough! Let's go first to the Morozovs!"

All got up and silently began to put on their coats. The district collectivization agent indicated with a gesture that I too should come with them, because all this had to be documented and a report for the authorities had to be written according to the rules.

As we came closer to the dispossessed cottage, Tymokha appeared. It was hard to say when he arrived, but I don't remember having seen him at the farmstead representative's cottage or on the street.

At the knocking at the shutters by the GPU agent, there was no answer for a long time. We all stood silently waiting. The agent knocked again and again. There was silence, as if all the inhabitants were dead and the cottage was empty.

"Knock! Go on, knock!" Tymokha encouraged him, and he himself began to bang on the locked shutters.

In a few minutes the wicket gate squeaked and a woman appeared. I recognized her voice—it was the same woman who had twice come to see me. She didn't see me in the dark. She opened the gate and stepped aside, letting us pass through and then, as a good property owner, carefully closed the wicket gate and hastened to open the cottage door for us.

The cottage, like all peasants' cottages, had two big rooms with the huge stove and a wide chimney wall dividing them. In the first room was a small oil lamp. Its dim, oscillating light was not sufficient and left the room in semi-darkness. Even in the poor light one could see very simple furnishings the same as in any other cottage on the farmstead.

Two girls were sitting on the floor. One was about five or six years old, and the other, about two-and-a-half or three. It was difficult to see what they were doing. On a big, high wooden bed an old woman was sitting, knitting something with trembling hands.

After we entered the room, the woman closed the door carefully and stood silently there observing us. Perhaps she recognized me, but she didn't betray me even with the slightest gesture. But most probably, she was confused and scared to see so many men coming into her cottage uninvited. I longed to warn her in some way about the approaching misfortune, but there was no way of doing so. And then, my warning would not help her. It was too late!

"Well, *kulachka*,<sup>10</sup> where you keep your wheat?" asked the GPU agent.

"What wheat?" answered the woman calmly.

"The wheat you have hidden with your husband!" he shouted.

The woman swiftly glanced over the uninvited people and for a moment her eyes rested on Tymokha. It seemed to me that she guessed why the stove maker was there. But she simply repeated once more, "What wheat?"

"Don't sham! Tell us where it is hidden!" the GPU agent insisted.

This time the woman didn't even answer.

"You!..." the GPU agent abused her with cursing. "Where is the wheat?"

Composed and calm she dared to tell him straightforward, "What can I tell? If you know where it is, there is no reason to ask me, just take it."

The GPU agent came close to the chimney wall and began to tap with his knuckles here and there. The sound changed from one place to another; in a hollow place the sound was clear; in a packed place it was toneless.

Tymokha came closer to the wall and prompted the GPU agent, "Here, comrade, here...right, here!.. Hit here, hit! It is here, I am telling you!" He tapped on the wall again and asked, "Don't you hear it?"

The GPU agent saw the hatchet in Tymokha's hand, grabbed it, and started to chip at the brick wall. After a while the brick cracked and from the hole a golden stream of wheat grains started to pour on the earthen floor...

"You!!!..." The GPU agent discharged several curses on the woman. "You, kulak's rogue!"

The others joined the agent in a choir of abuse:

"Here, here, this is how they live, these *kulachky*."<sup>11</sup>

"See, they are hiding themselves!"

However Tymokha's mocking was the most notable, "They don't have any whe-e-at!"

I was observing what was going on in silence. I knew that I was needed only to write a report that the wheat was found here.

And I was needed not only because many agents didn't know how to write, but also because it was an established rule that each party boss and GPU agent would give orders, but he should have some literate person write and rewrite all reports and account for their deeds, eliminating all the ugly details. Only in special political cases where it was not desirable to have witnesses, the GPU agents would write the reports themselves.

The woman still stood silently by the door. She was calm and expressionless, as in a trance; not a muscle moved on her face. Did she anticipate what she and her family would have to endure? Did she realize what terrible thing was to happen at any moment to her, her children, and her old mother? Could she even have guessed what was going to happen? Of course, not. Even I couldn't. She didn't know anything, because nobody could have warned her about it. And why warn her? What could have been changed? Could she have saved herself from a disaster? And if someone had dared to tell her the terrible truth, would he not have become one more unfortunate victim? No, nobody would have risked warning her!

"Get out of here!!!" the GPU agent suddenly bellowed at the woman, so loud that one could not recognize his voice.

The woman opened her eyes wide but asked him as quietly as before, "From where?"

The GPU agent screamed again, "From here! Get out of this cottage! And never set foot here again!"

"Where would we go? It is almost night...there is a snowstorm...and my small children..." she was talking so softly that one barely could hear her voice.

The brutal GPU agent didn't hear her and didn't want to hear her. He continued to scream at her even louder, "Get out!!! Get out of here!!!"

"My children...my old mother..." was pleading the woman.

"Your whelps are not my business! Get out of here, you carrion! Out! Out! Not even the smell of you should be left here! Out!!! Out!!!" Screamed the GPU agent at the top of his lungs.

The woman again repeated softly and quietly, "Where I would go out of cottage?...Small children...old mother...Where could I go with them?...Where?"

The impatient GPU agent jumped in front of her pointing to the door, "Out!!! Out!!! Out!!!"

The woman dared once more to say, "Where?..."

The enraged GPU agent threatened her with his raised fist. "Shut up! Gather your vile creatures! Or else I will throw them and you out in the snow myself!"

The scared children were looking at their mother. They were so terrified they could not even cry. They could not understand what was going on, but felt that something terrible was happening. The old mother got up from the bed and began to collect the small pieces of wood scattered near the stove in a basket. Even the District Collectivization agent seemed uneasy and went into the other room to observe as the golden fine stream of wheat grain poured out on the floor.

Silently the woman began to dress her children. With shaking hands she tied the knots on their kerchiefs and the leather ties on their sheepskin coats. Then she put on her children's feet small felt boots, got dressed herself, and helped her mother to tie a knot on her kerchief.

While the woman was dressing her children and herself, the furious GPU agent paced around her, swinging his fists near her face and relentlessly abusing her by disgorging blasphemous expletives intended to make her hurry up.

Both the district collectivization agent and the farmstead representative remained in the other room, where they were giving the impression of inspecting the hole in the chimney wall and making comments about the growing pile of wheat grain on the floor. Tymokha stood near the stove and, with obvious pleasure, watched and listened as the GPU agent was abusing the woman.

I had to remain near the table to take notes as instructed. I watched those poor children with pity. I don't know whose heart bled most in pain for them, their mother's or mine. It seemed to me that she still didn't realize all the horrors that awaited her beyond the doors of the cottage. My mind was trying to find some way to help the poor woman, but I knew there was nothing I could do for her, having all those malevolent men around. They represented danger for me as well, as I had just recently endured my own tragic encounter with GPU agents.

When the woman got everybody bundled up, she turned toward the corner—where dark icons covered with soot from the stove smock were hanging—and

crossed herself, bowing almost to the ground. Then she got a handful of wheat grain from the bowl on the cupboard and put it in her pocket, looked around on the walls of her cottage, and faintly said, "Farewell..."

As the woman with the small children and old mother walked outside into the snow, everyone followed her in silence. The snowstorm had turned into a blizzard. Without looking back, the dispossessed started on the road leading to the railroad station. The steep road going up the hill was now invisible behind the whirling vortexes of snow. The banished quickly disappeared behind the white haze.

For a while we all stood silently near the empty cottage, looking in the direction of the road, though the banished could no longer be seen. Even the GPU agent was suddenly speechless as he was trying to see with strained attention beyond the impenetrable whiteness; he probably was trying to make sure that the woman would not come back. It was hard to guess what kind of thoughts were passing through his criminal mind at that time. Was he thinking about the wasted lives? Was it possible that his heart was reproaching him for the evil that he had done? Maybe he heard his conscience and realized the evil that he had disseminated around him. Or maybe he was planning his next terrible deed. It is hard to understand the heart and soul of an inveterate criminal! I was afraid to even think about it.

Nobody was talking; all were engrossed in their own thoughts, which they did not dare pronounce aloud. Then, finally, the farmstead representative broke the silence by reminding everybody, "To think about it, there are twenty-five miles to the railroad station!"

The GPU agent, trying to be cheerful, commented with irony in his voice, "Let's go, comrades, we shall drink for the 'salvation of their souls.'" Then with a voice in which there was no more anger, as though he had completely forgotten what he had just done, he said, "Let's go to the farmstead representative's house." Now he had a desire only to warm up with a drink of vodka, and he added with the insistence, "Let's go! Let's go! We shall finish what was left in the bottle." But the GPU agent's indifference was only temporary. After I finished writing his report at the farmstead representative's house and saluted everybody, I heard him say, "The dogs deserve the dogs' death!"

As I was walking toward the school where I lived, all kinds of ideas were going through my mind, "Maybe I could follow the banished family and stop them...and offer them to wait in the school till the blizzard was over?.. But how I could find them?.. One cannot see the road—it is just one white extension of drifting snow—and the footsteps are covered as soon as one's foot is raised...It's impossible to even find in which direction they were headed...If I try to call them, the sound of my voice would be lost in the whirls of the snowy wind". I felt powerless. There was only hope that the Almighty shows them the road and protects them...

That night I couldn't close my eyes. I was listening to the sounds of wind hoping to hear the light knocking on my windows by the poor woman seeking refuge... I was thinking, "Why was the poor woman so submissive? Why didn't she show to her executioners her tears and her sufferings?.. When she came to me with a letter from her husband she did not hide her tears...Why then now didn't she cry and implore the cruel GPU agent at least to remain in the cottage until the blizzard was over? Was she mesmerized by his shouts and abuse, or was she protecting her children from being abused by taking it all upon herself?.. Or maybe she realized that nothing could touch

the people with the animal hearts. Probably it was the strength of a mother that kept her calm and composed during the ordeal..." I was lying on my bed with my eyes open and had a vision of two crying children and two lamenting women wandering in the blizzard...

The blizzard raged all night. Even the GPU agent and the District Collectivization agent stayed overnight on the farmstead not departing until early in the morning.

Christmas arrived. Somebody from the neighboring village came to visit their relatives in our farmstead and brought the latest news, which quickly spread on the farmstead, "The frozen bodies of two women and two children were found beyond the village on the side of the road leading to the railroad station. The two women were lying in the snowdrift next to each other and the mother held the two small girls in her arms as if protecting those little angels...Their faces were so peaceful, like they were asleep...They say that nobody knows who they were because they had no documents on them. And everybody was wondering why they were on the road in that kind of a blizzard."

The cottage of dispossessed stood there with its closed shutters and wide-open wicket gate. It was not hard for the farmsteaders to guess what had happened to their neighbors. But nobody knew for sure, except the three of us, the farmstead representative, Tymokha, and I. But we were not talking. Probably one day Tymokha would spill the truth. He would be drunk and would start to brag in front of the homesteaders about what had happened that night, reassuring them that he was telling the truth, "I am telling you, Tymokha knows!"

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In about two weeks I was leaving the homestead Proletarian Freedom. On the railroad station Matvyeyev Kurgan I was waiting for a train. Right before the departure of the train I saw the dispossessed woman with the mother and children. I was able only to find out that good people helped her—"the latest news" have swept their tracks from the Bolsheviks' watchdogs—and she was traveling now to one of the towns in the south of Russia, where her brother lived.

I felt relieved from the heavy weight in my heart...

## On Vacation

Excuse me, gentlemen, but it really happened that way, and I think these events should be reminded not only to those who have only a hearsay knowledge of those terrible times but also to the ones who had experienced them themselves.

I have never been a drunkard. I have never had fits of hard drinking. But in that terrible year for the Russian people I couldn't help but drink. And I drank as hard as I never had done before. Well, yes, I used to drink sometimes and I make no secret of it, though I didn't feel desire for alcohol. It was rather the opposite, I had an aversion to vodka. But still I kept drinking and it was a conscious decision. I did it to escape from my thoughts about myself, about my dear ones, and about everything happening around me. I drank until my brain was numb and I would lose consciousness. I drank probably because all during my childhood and all my youth I had felt love and now, I was destined to hatred. I drank maybe because I gave all my youth to Russia, which I loved like my mother, my sister, my bride and because of this love I sacrificed the best years of my young life to my motherland, enrolled as a volunteer in the White Army... And now... I had to forget all... I had to forget my love, my joy, my happiness, and my Russia... I had to serve the devilish USSR... That's why I had to hate! Do you understand? "To hate." You can't understand it, of course. So I shall repeat it: "I had to hate." Fortunately, I didn't know how to do it... I suffered badly, but...

Every time in my sufferings there was a remedy. And this remedy was vodka, at which I always looked with horror. I loathed it and still drank it. I detested it but still swallowed it as if it were quinine or a castor oil. But I swallowed it. Because I wanted for a while I could forget everything around me. reality to escape from reality, to be transformed into an object. And then I couldn't perceive anything from outside. Neither the evil, nor the filth of everyday life, nor the pain of the soul, nor the sorrow of the heart. I was turning into an object, which one could describe without any regret: "Without heart, without soul, because he dissolved his life in alcohol!"

In those moments God's light waned and I As I drank, I did not feel alive. In those moments I felt stuck between life and death... But it was not a bliss, as many could imagine me condition of being drunk. No, I felt like a doll, which could open its eyes and could utter a few simple words, the sense of which one could only guess.

When it came to such moments, it seemed to me that I was carefully placed into a cardboard box and was hidden into a chest or a wardrobe, where the smell of moth-balls, like anesthesia, put me completely asleep.

This time it happened the same again. It happened in December, 1934. I worked in a educational institution, which was preparing qualified personnel for the Soviet industry. The educational system included the so-called Rabfak or the Workers' Faculty, its task was to prepare the workers to enter institutions of higher education while they continued working in the industry.

It was my first year in Chistyakovo<sup>1</sup>. I should mention that I had never stayed longer than two-three years in one place, as my past was haunting me closely and only

once it managed to catch me. I came to Chistyakovo from the hamlet of Snyezhnoye feeling they would soon find out about my past. I had to move from place to place my whole life for the sake of my family.

Not long before the school winter vacations (not those we once called Christmas vacations!), I encountered our Rabfak party organizer, Comrade Katsman, who asked me, "Comrade Gladky, what happened to you in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye?"

I knew very well what had happened over there,<sup>2</sup> as I was expecting it coming all my life. But since this happened after I resigned and left and I found about it all the details from my former neighbor and me fellow teacher, I confidently answered, "To me? Nothing happened to me. But I heard that something happened there after I left. Exactly what happened, I don't know. I think that with your party connections you probably know it better than I."

Surprised with my answer, Comrade Katsman said, "Well, I thought that you knew..."

"No, but I heard about it," I confirmed. But could you tell me please, if I may continue to work here after the winter vacation?

"Yes, yes, of course, you may work here," he replied reassuringly.

I knew that my employment was depending exclusively on the quality of my work and on my experience and knowledge as a teacher, and especially on my ability to work with the adult students. For this I could depend on the evaluation and respect from a majority of my students and the teachers who were my subordinates and my friends

But my employment depended mostly on the people in the Regional Commissariat of People's Education who, without exceptions were all Bolsheviks, and on the three persons here at the Rabfak—the director, the *partorg* (party organizer), and the *profcom* (professional committee) secretary. They all could do anything with the information about my past at any time and, if they wanted, they could proceed with the further investigation.

The director of the Rabfak appreciated my work and I probably could count on his support as on a rock mountain, if only... he had not been a member of the Bolshevik Party. The secretary of party organisation, comrade Katsman, whose opinion I just heard, was a Rabfak student on the fourth year course and was my student in the chemistry class. His future didn't depend on me in any way, since he would receive his passing grades from any teacher who would come after me, as of his position in the party and not necessarily for his achievement in studies.

But what had exactly happened in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye? The whole book could be written about it. To cut a long story short, following the order of the secretary of the party organisation there, all students voted in favour of the resolution which said:

"Considering Gladky to be an enemy of the people, we are soliciting *gorpartkom* – party council of the city – and *gorispolkom* – executive council of the city – of Chistyakovo for his and his family deportation outside the borders of Ukraine."

Of course, it was only the very essence of it. Actually it included all my sins and it doesn't make sense to remember them now. But what deportation outside borders of Ukraine means was well known to millions of people. Where was those ominous "borders" ended – in Solovki, Kolyma, Karaganda?

The conversation with the party organiser took place one day before the two weeks winter vacation and I was on my way to pick up my salary envelope at the Rabfak

office. After receiving the money, I went directly to Rabcoop<sup>3</sup> to buy a liter of vodka and returned home.

When I entered the apartment and placed the bottle on the table, my wife looked at me inquisitively and asked, "What happened?"

I knew that she understood everything and answered, "Nothing, my dear. Everything is fine in this world!"

What else I could tell her in the presence of our daughter, who was then only nine years old. We brought her up protected as much as we could from revealing my past and the reasons for our constant moving from one place to another. We also protected her from the communist influence and propaganda. But she didn't receive the traditional middle class upbringing that my wife and I had. Most important, she was brought up detached completely from religion, which we as educators could not openly practice; we were instead expected to include antireligious teaching as a part of our curriculum in any subject. In her presence we tried not to talk with nostalgia about the past, which could have made our feelings transparent, and which she could have perceived with her young child's heart. We could not allow her to learn the truth, because in her childish naiveté she could tell her friends something that should not be told to anybody. Children talk with their friends and answer questions asked by cunning adults. More than once we witnessed how children ruined the lives of their parents with their talk. Our own daughter innocently helped with the inquiry about my past by answering the questions of our cunning neighbors in Snezhnoye.<sup>4</sup>

And this time, my wife and I were suddenly shocked to hear this small girl impulsively answering her mother, "Don't you know, Mama, that Papa drinks only when his heart is heavy?"

"But why should his heart be heavy?" asked my wife and added, "Tomorrow two weeks of winter vacations begins. He should be happy to have some rest. Do you think that maybe he is not happy for some reason with us?"

"No, Mama," blurted out Lyalya with the serious expression in her voice, "it is not with us that Papa is unhappy, but with the Soviet authority, which he doesn't like!"

"What are you making up, Lyalya?!" my wife sharply interrupted her.

"What did it have to do with the Soviet authority?" I injected.

"Don't you dare talk rubbish!" my wife admonished her. If somebody would hear you..."

"Don't you worry about me, Mama! Do you think that I am a small girl that doesn't understand anything? Nobody would hear such things from me!" answered my daughter in a reassuring tone of voice that left no doubt that she meant it.

Conversation stopped at that point, but we understood that in our small quarters we could not hide from our daughter that occasional unfavorable word or comment, nor a sigh, or a furtive glance between us. With her intuition she perceived everything with surprising accuracy. This was the first time she actually vocalized that she understood our aversion to the Soviet authority. After supper I had a glass of *nalivka*, because I really hated to drink vodka, then went to bed and quickly fell asleep. That was the beginning of my winter vacation.

I used to spend the whole day enjoying vodka and in the evening I used to fall in the bed dead drunk only to resume the same routine the next morning.

One day I heard our dog Knopsyk lazily barking in the hall, then some knocking;



my wife opened the door and saluted somebody in a friendly manner. A male voice asked for me. My wife knocked on my door, saying that somebody had come to see me. I noticed that Knopsyk stopped barking at the visitor and my wife's voice was calm; it meant that he was a friendly person. I sat on my bed and invited, "Come in!"

Carefully opening the door entered Maslyeyev, my former student from Rabfak in Snyezhnoye, who now was studying in the Dnyepropetrovsk Mining Institute. "What a surprise!" I exclaimed as we shook hands and asked him to remove his winter jacket and sit down on the chair.

While I was dressing, Maslyeyev told me that he was returning home to visit his family during the winter vacation. He had to walk eighteen kilometers from the station at Chistyakovo to the Coal Mine Number Nine, because there was no other way to get there. He knew from some of his friends that I had moved to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka and decided to stop and visit with me while he rested before proceeding to his home.

My wife prepared lunch and I invited him to share our meal. Nalivka had remained on the table from the last evening and we had a small glass before starting the meal. Then, knowing that the miners usually would not refuse a glass of vodka with the meal, I placed the bottle purchased yesterday on the table.

Maslyeyev was surprised to see that I had vodka in my home because my students had never detected even the smell of alcohol on my breath. With the secret watching by the members of the Bolshevik Party at the Rabfak, nobody ever accused me of the sin of drinking. And this increased respect toward me.

"Orest Mikhailovich," Maslyeyev said jokingly, "it appears that you... I mean, you also know how to drink."

"Of course! Why should not I drink a little?" I answered him in the same tone. "We, students, never could even imagine this about you! We were all convinced that you were a sober, non-drinking man," he confessed.

"Well, Comrade Maslyeyev, life as it is requires that one have a drink once in a while!" I replied.

"Sure, I agree. Sometimes it happens that one has to have a drink," confirmed my guest after the first glass. After the second one, he became more talkative and less inhibited in expressing his thoughts and opinions.

I knew Maslyeyev quite well. As a student, he was not as young as the others; he was probably already thirty-two or thirty-three years old. He was a very serious person and studied very diligently. He was a member of the Communist Party and when he was at the Rabfak, the students elected him as chairman of the Studcom, a Students' committee; besides, he was a real coal miner. I also knew his other attribute—he was a wonderful family man. All these traits of his character demonstrated that he was a simple, ordinary man, and in addition, unspoiled. I never heard anything bad about him.

Suddenly, contrary to all my usual precautions, I decided to become more open with him and asked, "Do you know what happened in Snyezhnoye?"

"Yes, I know. Some of my student friends wrote to me about it. But this is all rubbish, Orest Mikhailovich," he commented.

"It is very easy for you to say 'rubbish', Comrade Maslyeyev!" I exclaimed and specified, "But, as you can see, I have a family! And outside is snow and frost!"

"But, for now, nobody has touched you?" he asked.

"But who can guarantee they will not touch me soon?" I asked him in reply. "Do I

have to sit here and wait until they do? Here you came, knocked on my door, and my heart missed a beat or two."

"I can understand you," he said and after a short meditation asked me, "How are you settled here? How are they treating you here?"

"The same as they treated me in Snyezhnoye when you were there as a chairman of the Studcom; all students are very happy with me. But don't I know how quickly the students' mood could be changed."

"Yes, I understand. You see... Students know that you are a good teacher and they respect you with their hearts. But, you see... our party has all kinds of people. Like, for example in Snyezhnoye, Comrade Perekotiyenko. You know he had a grudge against you when I was there. But we all, the director, the Profcom secretary, and I, were restraining him! But he was a teacher of the Marxist-Leninist Theory and of the History of the Communist Party! With him we all had to be very careful because we were afraid that in the *Raypartcom*<sup>5</sup> they would believe him more than any of us. He was their man! And who were we? We were the masses, though we also understood something... but, our opinion doesn't count." Maslyeyev sat for a while silently and then added, "You know, Perekotiyenko was such an evil man that he would not have mercy on his own brother!"

"Why did he hate me so much?" I asked him, as I did not know the answer.

"Well, you stood in his way. I mean, you being an assistant director. And he fancied even in his dreams to be in your place! Obviously, he finally had somehow dug up the information about you. And the students... well, they probably had to do it on his instructions... you know, the low-ranking party members are trained to always follow without questioning the instructions that come from somebody on the top of the party organization."

I was glad to hear his opinion, but did not want to bring the conversation to the point of discussing my past any further and told him, "I did not imagine that man's vanity could blind him so much that he couldn't see his own merit! It is disgusting to even talk about the means he used in trying to get there! But think that it was all for nothing, because they didn't hire him in my place!" I closed our discussion with my last comment because it was becoming too dangerous for me to be asked by Maslyeyev about my past. I switched the subject to find out the news about my student, "It is better that you tell me about yourself. How successful are you in your studies over there?"

Maslyeyev emitted a long deep sigh like expressing a sorrow about something and then stated, "What kind of successes in my studies, Orest Mikhailovich? If I have to tell you what we were doing in the Institute, you would not believe me! This year we have not started studying anything yet!"

"What do you mean? The whole first semester has already gone!"

"Yes, it's gone, but we didn't start the courses we were supposed to study," he answered bitterly.

"What did you do all this time?" I asked him with curiosity.

"We were studying military science and contemporary politics!" he announced solemnly and ironically. In his expression was more irony than solemnity and he was not hiding it, probably because he was not afraid of me after our sincere conversation, and probably because several glasses of vodka removed his inhibition; the bitter truth was asking to come out to be shared with somebody without fear.

"We were learning how to conduct the collectivization!" he exclaimed. "And after

that we did engage in practical work. And how we did practice, Orest Mykhaylovich! To tell you the truth, our share was only the remnants after the trained people had done their work. Even that was terrible..." He paused for a while, like reviewing before his eyes the scenes about which he was about to tell me, and was collecting his thoughts.

Then he continued uninhibited, like he was pouring out what he had kept imprisoned in his mind until now, "We were traveling from village to village in Dnyepropetrovsk Agricultural Region, one of the richest regions in the Ukraine! Great extensions of fields! And even under the thick cover of snow, one felt like traveling over the fertile land. But we were not traveling on the roads; there were no roads; everything was covered with snow and huge snowdrifts. In the villages too, there were no cleared roads. In some places the snowdrifts covered the cottage roofs... there were no fresh sled marks or human footprints, only those of wild animals and birds... desolation was everywhere, like the whole population had died out..."

Maslyeyev was talking like in a trance, staring at the white wall and pausing between phrases and incomplete sentences. I was not interrupting him as he continued with his story, "It was a ghastly feeling... even I felt scared. And I have seen all kinds of horrors in the mines!.. I have seen people crushed, buried alive, suffocated, and torn to pieces... I myself have been covered up with earth and coal several times... but over there I felt terrified.

"We drove and drove without seeing one live soul... around us deadly still silence... and untouched snow, the first sled marks were ours. We would drive into a village and see cottage doors and windows open. In some places the wind had already scattered the straw from the thatched roofs, all signs that nobody was there. Everything was empty and silent, one couldn't hear the barking of dogs, or mooing of cows, no bleat of sheep, no human voice. We stopped in one village and from curiosity entered some of the cottages with the open doors. We found the huddled up frozen bodies of children, women, and old people... there were only a few old men, those younger ones were all deported.

For a long time Maslyeyev recounted me his terrible and true story; listening to it gave me the shivers. I was sitting there crushed by the seemingly almost incoherent story of my former student, member of the Communist Party, who had indulged in such confidence in his semi-inebriated state. I did not offer him more vodka as he had a long way home and needed to sober up.

"You are asking how I am doing in the Institute of Mining Science," he told me bitterly. "Even the military science they taught us was useless! As you can see, they sent us to make war against the dead! Thank God, two weeks of vacation are ahead. I will rest a little and maybe will be able to forget..." He did not finish the sentence and added, "They told us that in the second semester we will start the real studies."

Suddenly Maslyeyev looked at his watch, got up from his chair, and said, "I better hurry up, I have to walk now very fast to reach my home before it gets dark." And in saluting me he suggested, "And you, Orest Mikhailovich, don't wait too long. As soon as you can find a position far away from here, don't let it slip from you—move away from here. You are right, anything could happen at any time... it is foolish to sit here and wait until it happens!"

My former student left. I poured out another glass of vodka and drank it to forget everything...

I apologize for my drinking, gentlemen. I hated vodka, I detested it, I loathed drunk men and could not stand even the fumes of wine... But I kept drinking... What for?.. To escape from reality. To forget the asylum called USSR. To forget not only my own trouble. God still was protecting me. But to take off my mind off from the horror that was happening to all people. I could not fight against the evil system... I was powerless...

But I had hope. That hope forced me to be always careful. It was not my fault that this hope deceived me. And not only me alone...

## Saving Ourselves

It is a spring time. The hot sun has scalded the soil from which sultry and heavy vapour has been rising. It is impossible to walk on the macadam road, as the deep thin mud fills up the overshoes. It is better to walk on the side road over the last year's grass, though it is even harder, as not only the clay sticks to the overshoes but often you cannot drag the feet out of it.

I am slowly walking towards the village, which has been recently renamed as a "town." There is no barber's shop in our hamlet near the mine, so to have human appearance one has to overcome the sticky mud.

Two peasant women from the "town" are walking ahead of me. They are moving very slowly carrying sacks filled with bread that they have bartered for milk from the miners or employees at the mine. The distance between us gradually diminishing and I begin to hear clearer and clearer their voices.

"Well, how are you, Markovna?"

"As you can see, Andreyevna, we're still alive..."

"They didn't touch you yet?"

"So far... God showed us mercy... We are in the collective farm, ...saving ourselves..."

"Lord's wrath what's happening... People starve to death. They suffer for their sins. And according to the Holy Scriptures worse is to come..."

Hearing my steps, the women stopped talking.

## **“I’ll Dispossess You”**

A small group of passengers was waiting for the train at the railway station Minutka, near Kislovodsk. It was already dark. A quiet southern night was approaching. The evening freshness glided from the mountains. Everyone seemed to be lonely and kept silent. Only under the shed of the station lit by a big electric bulb was sitting on the bench a middle-aged woman, dressed in the rags. She was talking to herself in a low hushed tone, from time to time she was taking out from an old dirty basket lined by a rough cloth a bottle of vodka, putting it to her lips and slowly swallowing the burning liquid. Her speech was unclear, she was rather whispering something, but every time she was placing the bottle back, she kept saying:

“Well, my darling... I’ll dis-s-possess you to the end!..”

It was clear that the woman had learnt this word well in her life, and the tone of her voice reflected burning hatred for something familiar only to her.

It should be noted that in the beginning of the nineteen hundred thirties the Caucasus was the place of refuge for the dispossessed, to say it simply, peasants burglarized by the Soviet government and evicted from their homes and land. Here the collectivization had not started yet. People lived a free and untrammelled life. A persistent legend was passed around that Stalin was going to spare his birthplace from collectivization. Such privileged condition of the local population led to exploitation of cheap labor offering its services. It did not matter how hard the work was, how low the pay was, how terrible their living conditions were, men and women, the old and the young evicted from their native places preferred unbearable life in the relative freedom to the banishment in the concentration camps. According to the words of the survivors who had luck to escape from those camps, the people there were not only subject to severe torture but died of hunger, cold and inhuman conditions in which they had to live in and work.

And in general, it was a very troubled time for all population groups of Russia and the Caucasus was swarming with all kinds of politically suspect persons.

One of the passengers came near to the woman and grinning asked her, “Whom are you going to dispossess, grandma?”

“If I were strong enough, I would dispossess you... And I am not your grandma... You don’t know how to address people... educated!..”

“How should I call you then? Comrade?”

“Comrade?!. What kind of comrade am I to you?! Maybe you are the one of those who ruined my life... was also comrade... Had starved to death my children... deported my husband to the swamplands... Comrade indeed!.. Why are you grinning? Do you think I am afraid of you? My life is over anyway... It is all over with our peasant life... Antichrist has bought Russia... closed the churches... has exiled priests together with our muzhiks... Probably you have also forgotten God, haven’t you? Damn you, ...comrade...”

She got her bottle out again, took a mouthful of vodka and did not swallow it for a long time. Then, she silently put the bottle back into the basket and with her eyes shut,

swallowed the liquid with a loud noise. "You'd better go, out of harm's way. There are too many listeners here."

The passenger felt somehow uneasy, he awkwardly turned away from the drunken woman and left. The dark night hid the faces of the others, but it felt that the pain of this simple soul, which had experienced so much deep sorrow, was familiar and understood by everyone. It seemed that everyone understood that what was perishing was not simply a peasant woman, who lost her children and her husband, who was driven out from her home and was doomed to miseries with the label "the dispossessed," but that the whole Russia was perishing together with its deep Faith, Hope and Love... Yes, the Antichrist had mounted the bloodstained throne throwing into the abyss of infernal torture the country tormented by the revolution.

"Comrade!" How much warm feeling there was once in this familiar to everyone word! And now? It evokes hatred and shiver as if caused by something vile and vicious. It was clear why the drunken peasant woman could not calm herself. She kept mumbling her disconnected speech with the meaning which was understood by everyone. "That's why I drink... – for my children, may their Christian souls repose in peace... for my husband. Good man he was... humble... and a good farmer... That's why I drink... day after day... the fourth year... That's why, comrade! I'll dispos-s-sess you!" her shrilled scream was heard.

The noise of the arriving train distracted the passengers. In a minute the red glimmering lights of the train disappeared in the darkness of the night. Iron rattle echoed in the mountains.

The drunken woman howled mournfully under the railway shed.

## Tanya

Tanya Lozovaya grew up in a family not her own. Although not orphaned, she has no memory of her parents. She finished the village school. Some good people advised her, "Get away, Tanya, from the sin, from the village..."

Tanya obeyed and left, although she could not clearly understand why in the world she should leave the native place. In any case, when Tanya was leaving, one of her neighbors, a little old woman with the cane, the grandmother Agaphia, came out to escort her out of the village.

"Look, Tanyusha, over there is yours, hut, the garden – also yours, vegetable garden, don't you forget, child..."

"Why ours? Whose ours?" wondered Tanya.

"Your father's and mother's, Tanya..."

"And where are they?"

"I don't know, beautiful."

"Grandmother, are they 'raskulachenny' – the dispossessed?"

"Be quiet, girl, do not dare to say it to anyone... Behave yourself neatly... Keep your maiden honor... And most importantly, Tanyusha, remember dear God constantly and pray for your parents..."

The older woman Agaphia made the sign of the cross over Tanya on the road and began to hobble with her cane back to the village. And Tanya, with eyes full of tears, with pain and sadness slowly began to walk took to the far away and unknown town to some distant relative of grandmother Agaphia.

Tanya was literate, could write well, her penmanship was clear and beautiful. She was accepted to work for the people's court. Was copying the papers.

Tanya sparkled with youth and freshness, with the beauty of green fields and the freedom of a recent childhood. The people's judge, Comrade Blokhin, noticed these, Tanya's qualities, and fell in love with her.

Blokhin was tall, whiskered and awkward and furthermore, he was a party-member and married. But he offered his tenderness and love.

Tanya refused it, "If only father knew!..."

"But where is he?" asked this nosy "impartial judge."

Tanya thought, "I shouldn't say that he's in exile, up North in the impassable swamps chopping woods and suffering from scurvy," and replied, "He is dead..."

Blokhin got angry and fired the young girl, giving her a reference form stating "she cannot handle the work."

But the world does not lack good people. In a few days Tanya was already working as an office assistant in a large town school.



## The First Collective Farm Year

Shortly before the beginning of collectivization a new Partorg—the Party Organizer—Rudnitsky, was sent to the village. After he got acquainted with the village party members, before the re-election of the village council, he proposed at the meeting of the Village Communist Party organization, as a candidate to the office of the Chairman of the Village Soviet the local peasant, Party-member, Kurilchenko. For him the village communists had to reveal themselves at the meeting in order to register him in place of the old Chairman—Lugov—who was incapable of decisive action. Rudnitsky had by now come to know Kurilchenko very well. He saw him as an energetic person, possessing abilities to disregard the opinions of the peasants, or of his relatives, of which he had many as did other native inhabitants of the village. He knew this because Kurilchenko brought him information even about his own father.

The Village Party organization had in fact never made any decisions. Any proposal by the secretary was an unwritten law. These proposals were seemingly talked over, discussed but it always boiled down to the fact that they would turn out to have positive points and thus taken as though they were the decisions of the entire Party organization. This came about because none of the secretaries liked being contradicted and to those who opposed them they attached some kind of a business or another, attributed to them some kind of sin or other, and they were thereupon subject to reprisals. They were subjected to a written reprimand by the “general Party meeting,” or dismissed from the Party, or labeled as being “Trotskyists,”<sup>1</sup> “right wing deviants,”<sup>2</sup> “bent to the left,”<sup>3</sup> or they simply weren’t allowed to advance up the Party-Soviet ladder and were even removed from some good position. This situation made every secretary into an autocratic superior over all members of the Party, who issued orders following their own path.

When Rudnitsky nominated Kurilchenko for the election, every party member of the village Party organization backed his proposal, and in the Village Soviet re-elections Kurilchenko was “unanimously” elected.

Kurilchenko familiarized himself with the affairs of the Village Soviet and wanted to operate independently but one day Rudnitsky summoned him to the office and said, “I have directives from the top concerning the reorganization of work in the village. We’re starting to work on the collectivization of peasant households. Register all the *kulaks*—the well-to-do peasants, the *serednyaks*—peasants of average means, and those who are *kolebayushiys*—peasants who are vacillating about joining the collective farm. These are all people who possess their proprietary inclinations and we will have to use repressions...”

“I have all that under control, comrade Rudnitsky. I have no need of the Village Soviet because I, as a Party-member, have a record of everybody—where, who and what—I know all this.”

Prior to the determined attack on the peasants Rudnitsky and Kurilchenko “gauged” the whole village, prepared a list of *kulaks*, *serednyaks* and *kolebayushchiys*

and when the question about the organization of the collective farm arose at the meeting of the ComPoor—the Committee of the Poor—then the ringleaders of the village already had a hard line along which they directed the poor people. This line led, in the first place, to the members of the ComPoor being set against the kulaks.

“We ought to organize the *kolkhoz*—the collective farm—so our poor peasants have the opportunity to work the land; we ought to organize the *kolkhoz* so that our poor obtain an economic foundation in their lives; we ought to organize the *kolkhoz* so that our poor are led onto the clear path of a secure life,” sang Rudnitsky like a nightingale.

“But really, comrade Rudnitsky, how are we to till the land if we have no plough, or no harrow?”

“And if we have a harrow, are we going to haul it ourselves?”

“There’s nothing to the *kolkhoz*, it’s a clever thing—but if someone has a chicken, are they supposed to give it also to the *kolkhoz*?”

“And maybe a wife?”

The questions poured forth without stopping. Rudnitsky, despite having the strictest and most detailed circulars, resolutions and solutions—sent to him from the top—did not know how to answer because nowhere in all of these layers of paper did it mention anything about chickens or, for that matter, wives. And so, he was listening perplexedly to the questions and thought in earnest about how to “maneuver” in a way that would satisfy the poor peasants, but without diverging from the Party line. He was rescued by Kurilchenko.

“I ask you, comrades, why are you making such a hubbub from what you don’t understand? It was stated clearly, ‘Liquidate the kulaks as a class!’ Will we allow the kulaks in the collective farm? No, because they are our main enemy! And can we keep them in the village? No, because the small, individual peasant farming is being abolished. So, it means if we eliminate the kulaks how are we to use their property? We will take that completely and entirely into the collective farm—here you have a plough and a harrow, and a horse for the harrow! Do you understand, muzhiks? And as for the chicken—that’s a trifling matter and all will become clear in time. The main thing for us at the present time is to eliminate the kulaks and build a collective farm on their holdings.”

“What do we need at this present moment?” continued Rudnitsky. “It is necessary to expose every kulak, every *serednyak* and every *kolebayushiy* known to us; define exactly our poor peasants, so that at the moment we organize the collective farm we will know our strength—and the strength of our enemies—with accuracy. We must well and truly consider at the assembly of the ComPoor who is with us, who is one of us—and who is against us. Comrade Kurilchenko here has a list of all the peasants. We will listen and will speak out openly about every inhabitant of our village. We should remember that any hiding of the truth is a conscious concealment of our common enemies, and you should all be well aware, comrades poor peasants, of the consequences of such concealment. The Party and the government won’t give you a pat on the back!”

The question touched a sore point, because the poor were connected by threads of kinship to the kulaks. Everyone began listening to the Chairman with strained attention.

“Averchenko Stepan – four horses, two oxen, three cows, eleven lambs, five pigs,

a winnowing machine, a seed drill, a threshing machine..." read Kurilchenko from the list.

"Kulak!" shouted someone among the poor peasants who was not related to Averchenko.

With this cry the verdict was signed. Nobody, however, yet knew what the abolition of the kulaks would involve. Well, they'd be driven out of the village, re-settle somewhere in the towns, the factories, the mills; they'd go to far-off mines in the Donbass and life for them would somehow get right once more. Even Rudnitsky himself could not imagine what would be done with the prosperous muzhiks, though he spoke about some repressions. Perhaps for this reason the question about who should be included in which group was resolved so quickly. Only on one last name the poor peasants were halted, when Kurilchenko read out the list of *koleblyushchiy serednyaks*.

"Ganenko Fedor – three horses, a pair of oxen, a cow, a pig..."

"Kulak!" shouted carried away members of the meeting, and Kurilchenko needed a lot of efforts to calm the poor peasants.

"What's the matter with you?" he kept asking. "You haven't listened to the end and you shout 'Kulak!' This is a veritable *koleblyushchiy serednyak*, comrades. What if he has a small holding? And when did he acquire it? And it does not deserve pleasant words! He doesn't have horses, but small horses, and yet small oxen... are they *really* oxen? And the pig—I also have a pig! We can't immediately banish such kind of muzhik from the collective farm because he knows the land, understands when it is time to sow, when to harvest... Go on, ask Demchenko when to sow the winter crops—he'll tell you in the winter—because he only lives on the land but doesn't know how to work on it. Or ask Chumak when to cut the beet roots..." Everyone began to laugh and turned to Chumak, who was sleeping serenely in the back rows after a drunken night, not listening to any of the din that held sway in the meeting.

However, some members of the meeting insisted on transferring Ganenko to the kulaks and Kurilchenko, so as not to exacerbate the matter, made a proposal, "We will make a note of this, muzhiks," and proceeded to read out the list further.

Rudnitsky, who did not know the village, kept quiet, but after the meeting he asked the chairman of the village soviet, "And what about this Ganenko? Is he a strong muzhik?"

"Look, comrade Rudnitsky, how should we consider him? Going by his character he's a complete *serednyak*. He'll be delayed here and there but he'll end up in the collective farm. And we can't rely only on the poor—the ragged—they have never walked behind the plough! What kind of work can they do? And the holding should be managed just like a manor holding. Now all is all well because the kulak class sustains our poor peasants. It feeds them, so to speak. And if the kulaks are abolished then not only will the towns starve to death, but the poor in the collective farms themselves will be liquidated!"

Rudnitsky said nothing, but decided to see for himself. Kurilchenko understood why the secretary kept silent and the next day he summoned Ganenko to the Village Soviet. Waiting until there was no one around, he began a conversation with him.

"So what do you think, Fedor Kuzmich, about the collective farm?"

The collective farm was already a threatening subject for the peasants and in all of their conversations with official persons they responded vaguely, such as, "It's a hard nut to crack, and when we've bitten through it, we'll know for sure, maybe we get

accustomed." Ganenko replied along this same vein.

"Well of course, comrade Kurilchenko, we are in the dark about the collective farm because we haven't yet seen it in practice..."

"Look, Fedor Kuzmich—I am telling you that the kulaks are coming to liquidation, they will not exist any more; and everyone is pointing to you... I'm talking friendly to you... That is to say, I'm warning you... Because you're capable muzhik and not against the Soviet power... Well, I mean, if they start enrolling in the collective farm, then you should be the first in line to... It's for your own safety... Get it?... But not a word about our conversation, you see, to anyone! Because this is a very serious matter..."

"Of course, comrade Kurilchenko! I am well aware of that..."

And that evening, as though unplanned, Rudnitsky dropped in at the homestead to see Ganenko.

"So, comrade Ganenko, don't you have rather too much work?"

"We are used to it, comrade Rudnitsky..."

"Well, I've dropped by to chat about the collective farm..."

"Why not, we can, just come into the house..."

Rudnitsky walked in with the owner and stopped in some kind of numbed state. In a large room with an enormous peasant stove, next to the window on a low bench, sat a girl, peeling ears of corn. He was struck so much by her beauty that he became perplexed.

Young, strong, brimming with health, with symmetrical features on her face, the black-eyebrowed beauty looked at him in surprise, since he didn't say even "Hello," and went back to her work.

Rudnitsky sat with Fedor Kuzmich and began his talk, but all of his attention was concentrated on the girl.

Fedor Kuzmich, who had been prepared by the chairman, did not reveal his watchfulness and answered, "Yes, for sure, we first in line will register because individual farming is not within our muzhik's power... What, for example, I have for farm hand? Yes, I and my wife—well, and there's my daughter, Marfusha... And if I give her in marriage, who am I then? An absolute poor! Because I've got no one to look after the oxen, and the hired hands, you can understand yourself, though the government does not prohibit it, but how it would be looking at us? We also understand this."

Rudnitsky did not listen to Fedor Kuzmich as he was so engrossed by the daughter and was thinking only one thing, "Well, what a girl! That is a girl! And what a beauty!..."

As he took his leave he decided to ask her all anyway, "And you, beautiful girl, will you go to the collective farm?"

Marfusha lifted her huge blue eyes, which were ever so slightly crossed—rendering her all the more interesting, all the more attractive—and laughed for some reason, displaying her white, chiseled teeth and answered, "What shall I do? My father is a master, and as for me, it's all the same where I work..."

"We will make you chairman of the collective farm!" said Rudnitsky, finding at last a joke, and bidding his final farewell he reluctantly left.

"Well what about that! What a girl! One can bring her into town! Attired in city clothes—an artist... What's the name... Marfusha...Ye-e-es!" reasoned Rudnitsky with himself all the way back to his house.

From then on, an image of the girl followed him anywhere and everywhere. The whole time he would repeat, "Well, what a girl! What a beauty! You'd never be ashamed to show your face about the town with that one!"

He wanted to pop in one more time to Ganenko's, but couldn't decide to do it. On the one hand he felt that he would weaken in her presence and was afraid—afraid of that beautiful girl; and on the other hand—he was afraid that news would reach the regional office that he was consorting with the kulak, because, although Kurilchenko had smoothed it over, the poor peasants had been right in calling Ganenko a kulak. The party organizer allowed himself one thing—to walk past Fedor Kuzmich's farmstead sometimes in the hope of seeing Marfusha. But not once did fate deal him such luck.

At the peak of winter began the meetings, conferences, gatherings, and activities and Rudnitsky had to be present everywhere, to speak until he lost his voice, and Marfusha, for the time being, was set aside. Only now and then would he sigh and think, "Well, what a girl!... Except from a kulak family..."

In one of the PoorCom meetings they went through the village with a fine tooth comb. When they reached Ganenko the poor peasants let out a cry, "Kulak!"

Rudnitsky understood perfectly well that Ganenko was an enemy of the Soviet power, but the image of Marfusha appeared before him and, after patiently hearing Kurilchenko defending Fedor Kuzmich, he spoke out decisively against the poor peasants, "What has happened to you, comrades—don't you have faith in the Soviet power? Didn't you elect comrade Kurilchenko to the Village Soviet? And the Party organization approved of your choice because comrade Kurilchenko is not only in favor of the Soviet power but is also a member of the Communist Party. And now what? You are making out of him if not an obvious enemy of the Soviet power, then a real *podkulachnik*—kulak sympathizer."

The poor quieted down. To raise an objection against the secretary of the Party organization could easily mean finding oneself in the category of *podkulachnik*, so better to keep quiet. Thus, in the eyes of the entire village public opinion, Ganenko had won.

Kurilchenko was now glad to have tried, and wrote him down not on the list of questionable persons, but simply on the list of common *serednyaks*, who were not yet under any particular suspicion. But he accepted the party organizer's speech in good faith and began to partake of his village duties more confidently.

A terrible winter was going on in the year of nineteen hundred and thirty one. Three quarters of the village had disappeared. Some had been driven out of their homes; some had died of starvation, only a few saved themselves by escaping, by reaching the towns and the far-off mine shafts where work hands were needed, and where nobody asked about past social position—in fact it was hardly considered because the government required production quotas to be fulfilled. From the remaining hungry peasants a collective farm was organized. Ganenko got into it, too.

Before the election of the administrator of the collective farm Kurilchenko spoke to Rudnitsky, "We don't have anyone to name as a chairman... The collective farm is just starting up... We need a strong, capable man who has enough strength..."

The party organizer himself could see that there was no one to choose from and suddenly suggested, "You know, comrade Kurilchenko, we will put you in the position of chairman!"

"And what about the Village Soviet?"

"You know, the Village Soviet now is just a statistic... There is nothing to do there... We will choose Emelyanenko for that and you can run the collective farm.

Kurilchenko wanted to remain in the Village Soviet but he was enticed by the collective farm and answered uncertainly, "That wants thinking over, Comrade Rudnitsky..."

"What is there to think over? Since the Party requires, we ought to comply... There's nothing at all to think over..."

There was nowhere to retreat and shortly after, by recommendation of the Party Organization, changes were made in the Village Soviet and Kurilchenko was elected as a Chairman of the collective farm governing body.

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They never stopped talking about Fedor Kuzmich Ganenko, who had ended up in the collective farm on equal footing with the poor peasants. These conversations had begun ever since the first time Kurilchenko stood up for him in the ComPoor meeting, defending him against the onslaught from the poor peasants. The Partorg—Party organizer—himself had followed Kurilchenko's lead and defended him, rousing the astonishment of the peasants, and the conversations about it did not dissipate but simply grew more guarded.

They spoke so that the leaders could not overhear. Everyone was struck by the incident and searched for an explanation, but all their conjectures were in vain, since the perpetrator responsible for leaving Ganenko in the village remained above suspicion. The perpetrator of this was Kurilchenko, who's eyes had been on Marfusha for a long time now, desiring to get close to her. Before the organization of the collective farm he had taken no steps towards this. There were many reasons why he'd been limiting himself to merely observing. In the first place, she was from a family, which according to their social position, stood on the border along with the "enemies of the people"; in the second place, he was married. His courting of Marfusha, the daughter of kulak Ganenko, could have damaged his party reputation and he was extremely careful about his activities at all times. But now, in the collective farm, such opportunity for coming closer to the girl had become entirely feasible. She was no longer a kulak, not a *serednyak*, but a regular collective farm worker. He'd be able to see her more frequently and there would be nothing strange about it. And as chairman of the collective farm he could allocate her to work wherever he wanted, wherever was most advantageous to him.

Rudnitsky, unaware of Kurilchenko's intentions towards Marfusha, thought that a convenient time had now arisen for him to approach the beautiful kolkhoz-worker, because she was always in the farm courtyard. Considering himself to be the master of the collective farm, he ordered the placement of the workforce through the chairman. In doing so, he thought to allocate the girl someplace close by, where he could meet her without any bystanders, but so that the meetings had an "official nature" about it. He wanted these meetings to happen a little more frequently.

The collective farm leaders, both with pretensions to Marfusha's love, had their own thoughts, constructed plans and dreamed of future happy days. They both imagined that the girl should be flattered with the attentions of the collective farm

chairman or the secretary of the party organization, and would be all but ready to jump on the neck of an uninvited Don Juan...

But the girl, of course, knew nothing and suspected nothing. She did not see the storm clouds brewing on the horizon of the collective farm, or that her fate was passing into the hands of two leaders who could not put up with insubordination. She also did not understand that the reason for the relative well-being of her family was she, herself.

Alive, cheerful, hard working, she yielded to the hungry days on the collective farm, but did not lose her beauty and her appearance in the courtyard of the collective farm had the same impression on everyone, everyone thought along the lines of, "What a girl! And such a beauty! It wouldn't be a sin to hanky-panky with her."

These words expressed all the rapture caused by Marfusha's beauty. But this rapture gave rise also to respect towards her. Many of the muzhiks, and in particular the young men, were timid in her presence and all, without exception, were afraid of her sharp tongue. Indeed, if someone were to approach her mildly, good naturedly, she would burn him so much with some word that for a long time afterwards it would wander around the village and sometimes it would stick to the culprit.

She had, of course, a young man—as had every young girl—Stepan Tkachenko, who was now also a collective farm worker. He was the complete opposite of her—small, puny, with a large, pock-marked face, upon which sat a snub little nose. Stepan was homely, but infinitely kind. He lived in his father's house, as a neighbor of Ganenko, and had the good fortune of "having good time" outside every evening with his beloved Marfusha.

Their love went back a long time, but however unsurprising it was for the village—where everyone always knew everything, who was "having good time" with whom—they were never suspected of that most commonplace of sins among young. Perhaps it was because in company Marfusha treated Stepan no differently than the other young men and he, in turn, did not attempt to pay any particular attention to her. Perhaps it was because he was so unattractive and, on the contrary, the girl was universally recognized as a beauty. But nobody suspected that late at night going home they would right away meet each other in the garden plots, would sit under a stack of straw, and would exchange caresses until daybreak.

Right before the commencement of collectivization, Stepan, embracing the girl in the hour before dawn asked her, "How about we marry, Marfusha?"

"Whatever for, Styopa? You see what turbulence is in the village..."

"Do you think we should wait until it is over?"

"Let's do it after the collective farm is over, Styopa... And the Lent is now... so, it's not possible..."

"That's true..." agreed Stepan and, enraptured and filled with love, they parted with these bright hopes of better days.

Only Maria Timofeyevna, Marfusha's mother, knew about this love and in front of her Marfusha did not hide their secret. But her mother kept quiet; spoke to no one and did not dare to tell her husband because Fedor Kuzmich always said, "Marfusha needs a man just like her—who is an eagle! Even if it means taking the girl to the town! Where in this village one can find young man that could be equal to her? There are none! And the girl is beautiful!"

To which Maria Timofeyevna would object gently, "Don't you go looking for an

eagle for Marfa, but a man with a heart... And why do we have to look for her... Such girl can find by herself! She's able to choose for herself!"

"It's my fatherly duty to make arrangements for my daughter."

"My father also wanted to make arrangements for me," Maria Timofeyevna would answer on these occasions, alluding to the fact that Fedor Kuzmich had taken her against her father's will. "And we've lived through thirty years, praise God, and still now we're like the young couple and we're still in love!"

Fedor Kuzmich would smile and didn't know how to answer his wife; if the truth is there in their home, you don't have to search far. But still he had his thoughts about how to marry his daughter to some handsome, deserving young man...

Marfusha knew about these conversations, and perhaps because of this she put off that definitive moment when she would have to tell her father the opposite.

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On the very first day of the collective farm the contenders met Marfusha in the collective farm courtyard. Stepan stood on the sidelines, not suspecting that the leaders harbored any foul intentions toward his beloved; meanwhile Rudnitsky and Kurilchenko divided "the people" into brigades. This was how the first misunderstanding arose, the reason for which was not discerned for a long time.

Kurilchenko allocated Marfa Ganenko to the brigade for field crop cultivation team of workers. The girl herself was indifferent to the assignment, but it turned out that it did make a difference to the party organizer.

"Comrade Kurilchenko, Ganenko ought to be placed at the collective farm building. Who is going to clean up around here? This is also the party organization..."

But Kurilchenko remained firm in his decision.

"For that, comrade Rudnitsky, we'll put in some old man or other. Why put a young, healthy girl there when there are not enough people on the land?"

The party organizer understood his mistake and didn't enter into a quarrel with the collective farm chairman in front of the collective farm workers; but the rivals had begun to understand that the matter was not about having a cleaning woman for the office building, but about the thing that each of them were thinking, where would be most convenient to meet with the "beautiful girl." Rudnitsky had thought about meetings at the collective farm office building, and Kurilchenko—at the green pastures of the collective farm.

At the next party meeting, Rudnitsky showed the chairman of the collective farm his power as party leader, "The activities of the party leaders," he said, "should be agreed upon. What do we have here? The chairman of the collective farm distributes the work force without the full knowledge of the party organization secretary! Is this right? No, comrades, it's radically wrong! What will come of this? The authority of the Party will fall in the eyes of the ordinary collective farm workers! What will this lead to? To the weakening of party leadership! And in the face of a weak party leadership the hidden kulaks and *podkulachniks*, even the most doubtful of the *serednyaks*, will start to act not even on the sly, but openly. It is surely not a secret, comrades, that in some places we have the cases when because of the weak party organization, the hidden kulaks are lifting up their heads and openly speak against the soviet power! It is not a secret that on these occasions the party members and, in the first place, the chairmen of the



collective farms, become the victims of such speeches. You are all aware that the murders of responsible collective farm party members are taking place specifically on these grounds. I must sharpen your attention on this, because comrade Kurilchenko is completely ignoring the guidance of the party organization secretary. Perhaps for him, there is no authority and leadership of the Politburo of the Central Committee of our Party. So let him report this at the party meeting."

Kurilchenko understood that the real question was about Marfa Ganenko and demonstrated the expedience of his decision, but all the same the party meeting passed a resolution: "For the first time, to warn the chairman of the collective farm, Kurilchenko, for making independently the decision concerning important matters of collective farm life."

This signified that next time not only would he be reprimanded but he would lose his leadership role in the life of collective farm and the village. The resolution was a serious warning and Kurilchenko felt he had to smooth over his "guilt" before the secretary of the party organization at any cost.

From that day onwards the chairman of the collective farm was very careful in his actions, afraid to stumble, but inside he was content—Marfa Ganenko remained in the field-crop workers brigade and he would have the opportunity to see her whenever he wanted and wherever he wanted.

Rudnitsky, on the other hand, was very unsatisfied with the way things had gone and searched for a way to alter the decision of the collective farm chairman.

A thick layer of snow still lay on the fields and the field crop brigade worked on fixing up the collective farm courtyard, out buildings, tidying the stacks of straw, hay and other feeds collected from the individual homesteads' yards. Everyday Marfusha was under the eye of the collective farm chairman and the secretary of the party organization.

Kurilchenko simply devoured her with his eyes, setting aside any decisive action during the period of the field work, while Rudnitsky has worked out a general plan of approach, which should have been implemented right away, while the field crop brigade was working on the collective farm premises. He devised all kinds of work for the girl—if not precisely on the premises of collective farm offices, then as close as possible on the collective farm courtyard, and then he personally led the working group in which Marfusha had been placed.

But it was all very strange. He—a responsible party worker in the village, the most diligent in his activities to dispossess the kulaks, who held in his fist the entire party organization, the village soviet and, therefore, the entire village—he was flustered in the presence of a simple village girl!

By night, when he was finally released from all the meetings, he'd lie down to sleep and thought about what he would say to Marfusha, how he would approach her, how he would conduct himself. In his mind everything was turned out very well—perfectly, in fact, but the next day, as he approached her, he had no idea what to do with himself, and his orders merely raised a laugh from Marfusha, which in turn infected all those around her. With that, he was becoming completely helpless. If it had been someone else, he would have immediately found a means of exerting influence, but in this case he could do nothing—not just with her, but with himself. He was unable to think of anything to show himself as at least the most average, most ordinary, the

simplest leader before her. Of course, he could apply the usual method of intimidation during the collective farm general meetings, but firstly, he saw that it was impossible to intimidate her, because she was afraid of nothing, and secondly, of course, it might raise the question of her social origin, which he himself had helped to conceal.

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One day the secretary devised some work for Marfusha.

"What a filth it is here!" he said to Kurilchenko, who was about to do the work allocations for the following day. "Like in the pig pen! We will have to white-wash the rooms in the administration building before the fieldwork begins."

"You speak the truth there, comrade Rudnitsky. Only who shall we appoint?.. There are a lot of women now..."

"And what about... what's her name... Ganenko, perhaps..."

"Who, the old one or a girl?"

"A girl, of course! An old woman wouldn't finish in a month!"

"But won't she need someone to help her?"

"What sort of help? Here? A peasant woman can white-wash her entire cottage without any help, comrade Kurilchenko, and in the collective farm she suddenly needs help? If we squander our work force like that we are bound to starve! This will not do at all, comrade Kurilchenko!"

That evening the chairman assigned the collective farm workers to their jobs for the following day, telling everyone who should do what; he kept Marfusha in the administration building and when everyone had gone, he took her by the hand and led her around the rooms of the collective farm house, in which there was not only the administration office but also the office of the Party Organization secretary. The partorg secretary was not there at the time.

"You see, Marfusha, it's filthy here..."

"The house is like its owners," replied the girl, boldly.

"Don't... talk like that... you're not from the poor class... Just look, the accommodation that needs white-washing".

"Why haven't you cleaned it until now?"

"We were waiting for you, girl. So this will be your work tomorrow," said Kurilchenko and clasped her around the waist.

"You, comrade Kurilchenko, would do better to embrace your own wife," articulated Marfusha, while pushing away the chairman's hand. "And as for the cleaning, what exactly do you expect—that I finish it in one day by myself?"

"Is one day not enough for you, beautiful?"

"On the collective farm for a horse one day is not enough to get home—and you want me to manage on the collective farm rations to finish it in one day?"

"Marfa, don't you forget who you are—tighten your tongue, and thank me that you ended up on the collective farm and not with the kulaks!"

"Thanks to comrade Rudnitsky, but not you! What are you? If they pull the rein to the right—you're on the right, if they pull it to the left—you turn to the left!"

"Marfa, you realize that I can send you to rot in Siberia?! You are within my power to put the matter forward at the meeting and Rudnitsky will sign for it! The people are in my hands!" said the chairman, showing his hand and clenching it into a fist. "You should

oblige me if you want to save your family, if you don't want them to die! And you, what—you're not afraid of anything? Think better of that... I know you have a sharp tongue but if you want to live, tighten it..."

Marfusha grasped immediately that Kurilchenko was right but showed no sign of yielding.

"You better, comrade Kurilchenko, tell me about my duties..."

"Well then this is about your duties... Is two days enough?" he asked, already in a peaceful tone, embracing her once again.

"Comrade Kurilchenko, your wife has not only a sharp tongue, but strong arms from collective farm meals," she replied, breaking loose from his embrace. "I'll manage it in two days—just make sure that the chalk and quicklime are already prepared."

"Well, that's been arranged... and you don't have to worry about my wife, you'd do better to worry about yourself. Your first duty is to oblige me, understand?" the chairman continued to instill fear.

The next day the partorg secretary spoke to the chairman, "You keep an eye on the people because they try to malingering, they don't want to work... While you're near them—they work, turn your back—they stand idle..."

"I can't be everywhere at once, comrade Rudnitsky. On the courtyard and here too..."

"Why are you needed here? Ganenko is working alone and I'm here the whole time. There's nothing for you to watch here."

That's not what the chairman thought, not at all. Things were turning out badly—he hadn't even imagined this. He'd expected having the secretary to run about the courtyard, but instead it was he who had to, and to refuse was impossible because observing the work of the collective farm workers was his duty.

By now Marfusha was already white-washing the chairman's office. Tucking up her long skirt, she stood on a table and white-washed the ceiling.

Rudnitsky, after sending Kurilchenko on his way, set about "checking" the work. He opened the door and halted—a woman's bare legs appeared unexpectedly in front of him—white, shapely, strong... The party organizer fixed his eyes upon the young female body; his thoughts became confused and, like a drunk, he took a slow step forward. At the same time Marfusha bent herself to dip her brush into the pail of chalk solution and her solid, bare legs completely stupefied him. Panting, he ran up to the girl, clasped his arms around her and started to pull her off onto the floor. Marfusha understood what the secretary wanted from her, and snatching the pail with the solution, she tipped it over the uninvited overseer.

Startled, the partorg rushed out of the office, leaving behind white chalk footprints along his path of retreat. After locking himself in his office, he began to clean off the chalk that had soaked into his suit, but the marks, as they dried, looked even brighter. So he donned an overcoat and ran towards his apartment.

After changing his clothes, he returned to the collective farm office buildings and summoned Marfusha to his own office.

"Ganenko, do you know that it was not by chance that you ended up on the collective farm? You know that if it wasn't for me you'd be in the remote North? Do you know that your parents would have long ago been with others like themselves somewhere in Siberia? You should be grateful to me because I took pity on you!"

Understand? And this is the gratitude you are showing to me?"

"What do you mean?" asked the girl in astonishment.

"With the chalk!"

"Inadvertently, comrade Rudnitsky, I didn't mean to... I caught the bucket..."

"Look at me! You should be obedient, understand?"

Marfusha left. She stifled her tears. She already knew perfectly well that up until now only she, with her beauty, had saved her parents, but could she save them for much longer? Fear seized her. She knew very well what Kurilchenko and Rudnitsky demanded from her and that now, after the warnings, they would be bolder in their advances.

"What to do now? How to behave? Should I buy my mother and father's freedom with my maidenly honor? Whom to ask for advice? And who can say what should be done? Should I complain? To whom? There is none in the village superior to Rudnitsky, and in the town?... All leaders are party members! Would they really believe me?... And even then it is only by the grace of those two leaders that I remain in the collective farm, and in the village. In fact, I'm a kulak! That was what the chairman said, that was what the party organizer said. They came right out with it because they're not afraid, because they know that no one, anywhere will believe me. And what is more, I am to be grateful to them! How? They found how. Lechers—damn them!" thought the girl in her lonely quandary.

It was painful to acknowledge the difficult truth, but even more painful was the fact that she could find no way out. Should she tell her parents—and be ashamed, and force them to suffer as well? Should she tell Stepan? Oh yes—he would find a way of protecting her—he is fiery, but that would make it worse for everyone, everyone will be destroyed... No, there was no one she could tell, no one she could cause to suffer.

With these dismal thoughts Marfusha stood on the table, keenly listening to any sound reaching her from behind the closed doors, and continued white-washing.

The chairman's small office was ready by dinnertime and Marfusha, after a break, set to work on the second room—the general office.

The doors to the partorg's office were open and Rudnitsky, who had settled down at his office desk, observed her. For a long time he sat, smoked and spat on the floor. Before him on the desk lay a sheet of paper and he idly moved a pen along it. Marfusha could perfectly see this and understood that the partorg had no work to do, that his "writing" was a cover-up. His hands moved the pen along the paper but his eyes ogled her. Finally, he rose from behind the desk and, in all likelihood, wanted to go into the village office where one girl was working, but at that moment the entrance door creaked and Kurilchenko appeared on the threshold.

Seeing that the party organizer was not in the office, he bee lined directly towards Marfusha. Rudnitsky halted behind the doors, biding his time until the chairman left. But Kurilchenko, clasping Marfusha's legs, began the sweet talk, "Well, beautiful, perhaps you'd like to take a rest."

"I've already covered one with the chalk—and now do you want to be?" she asked.

"You be careful, Marfa, I'm your boss all the same... Wait a moment... I have something to tell you."

Marfusha wanted to tear her legs away from his grasp and hit him in the face, she wanted to shout so the partorg would come out from behind the doors where he was hiding, but she decided, "No, I'll let them cross each other—maybe they'll squabble

and leave me be.”

“I’m ordering you!” shouted the chairman, wanting to drag her off the table by her legs; but at that moment Rudnitsky appeared at the doors, “Comrade Kurilchenko, come over here for a minute.”

Kurilchenko immediately changed. Without saying a word, he minced into the office to the partorg. Rudnitsky slammed the doors loudly.

“If only God could help me,” thought Marfa, understanding that one of the leaders would not frighten her from now on.

“What’s all this, comrade Kurilchenko? Have you forgotten the Party slogan: ‘The road path for women?’ Remember, now we have equality and woman is respected on an equal footing with men as a citizen of the USSR, and you keep your respect in your pocket? And what is with this ‘I am ordering you’ towards an ordinary collective farm-worker? Do you have cause for this? Speak! She doesn’t obey you? We must conduct our work with political awareness. You have general meetings, a wall newspaper, productivity conference—those are the means by which we can exert influence over the backward cultural element. And you want to substitute the educative work of the Party with administration by mere injunction?!”

“Yes, but comrade Rudnitsky, I was forced to behave accordingly. I just had to ask Ganenko a question... I daresay you yourself heard the way she answered me...”

“You know, comrade Kurilchenko, there is no reason at all for you to grip a girl’s bare legs. You probably have your own woman—there’s no explanation... I’m utterly and completely warning you... I won’t raise the matter at the party meeting because the common party members will laugh at you and your authority will be undermined, but if you repeat this mess one more time—hold onto your party membership card tightly—because the Party would not take into consideration your pre-revolutionary services then!”

“You, comrade Rudnitsky, are... Too much... You don’t know the village... Here it is all very simple for us... Men embrace girls...”

“We must introduce the culture!.. Yes, and to respect women, comrade Kurilchenko, and you can grasp naked legs at home. The Party does not meddle into the private lives... understand? And don’t give orders—take notes, and then at the meetings, in the wall newspaper, scour it with sand—this will give better results than orders, understand?... Well, now go, and I have told you that I’m watching the work here. I suppose you should trust me, huh?”

Kurilchenko left. Marfusha saw that he got it hot from the party secretary. She was at once glad and frightened too because Rudnitsky sat opposite and watched her with greedy eyes and followed her every movement. But thankfully, the day had ended well.

The following morning Marfusha was supposed to start work on the secretary’s place. When she arrived at the collective farm office building, Rudnitsky was already waiting for her.

“Well, comrade Ganenko, I will help you to clear the office. That table needs taking out because there are secret papers here,” he said, and as he passed the girl he stroked his hand around her waist, as if by accident. Marfusha got on her guard, but said nothing. Together they carried out the table with the “secret papers” and returned to the office.

"Now, let's take out this divan," said the secretary and went up to a peasant bench with a wood-carved back.

Marfusha took one corner but he stopped her, "No, you go on that side..."

The girl obediently followed partorg's instructions. As she passed by him, he grabbed her and began to throw her on the divan. Marfusha started to resist and as she snatched away her hand she struck him on the nose with all her might. The blow was so hard that blood surged out. The sobered partorg threw the girl aside and ran to the water to wash his face. Meanwhile, Marfusha had dragged out the remaining furniture and begun to white-wash. Rudnitsky didn't appear at lunchtime. After lunch he showed up with a swollen nose.

"What's with you, girl, so serious?... I wanted to joke and you caused a fight," he began in offended tone. And for fighting we prosecute, do you know that? But I'm not a vindictive man..."

"I didn't mean to, comrade Rudnitsky, my hand tore itself away. And what kind of joke is that? It's not good to joke like that... it's easy to damage a girl... and who would want her then?"

"This is not the old regime for you, Ganenko. Women are liberated now, and a man who falls in love with such a girl does not look at her past..."

"That's maybe so where you live, in the town, but here they still smear your gates with tar!"

"Savages," grinned the secretary. "All that is prejudice, Marfusha. And when the nature requires it?"

"Why do you come crawling to me, then? Embrace your nature, and keep your hands off me!"

"You're still uncivilized—you have no education at all. You need to understand that you *are* the nature that men require."

"No-o-o," Marfusha protested, while continuing to white-wash, "we weren't taught that in school. Trees, earth, rocks, crops, grass—that is nature, and I—I am a woman—and I will die as a woman! That is what we were taught, and that is how it was written in the books."

"It is likely that your books were from the old regime... And the teacher as well... You should know that from now on that a man is also nature—that is what our Soviet science tells us, understand?"

"Well, all the same, I'm not a man. I'm a woman, even more, I am still a girl."

Rudnitsky approached her once more and embraced her, "See, you're making fuss for no reason. You're young. You're probably looking for a man for yourself? And I am here available... So come, let's handle things amicably, and no one will know..."

"Watch out, comrade Rudnitsky, in case I accidentally swipe your ear," warned the girl, wrenching herself free.

"Look Ganenko, you're going to cry, only then it'll be too late!"

"Better to cry than to warrant disgrace."

"Well, think it over, I can wait a little."

"There's nothing to think about, comrade Rudnitsky. You no doubt have your own wife—think of her. And I'm not some kind of loose girl for you..."

"I will remind you once again that you remained in the collective farm because of me... That's why I say... think it over... So, we'll meet again!"

The partorg left, leaving the girl to ponder her fate once more. "No", she thought. "I'd rather die—hang myself, drown myself, but will not give my honor to them—never!"

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The admirers lay low for a while. One was afraid, and the other was biding his time. Marfusha continued to earn her hungry workdays and to think. Her youth was earning for life and she had to think about death, for there was no other way out. She understood that one day partorg would ask, or simply demand, and then what?..

She bore these heavy thoughts inside and didn't say a single word to anyone because she knew that no one could help her. If only it was possible to leave the collective farm and go into the town! But everyone was trapped—not just herself.

Until spring everything was quiet. In April the agricultural work began. The remaining scraggy horses and oxen could barely move their legs. A group of six had to be harnessed in a small plow so they could till the earth. Sowing was done by hand because they were afraid that the animals' strength would fail with the sowing machine and they would end up dragging the harrows by hand. In the peasant huts was empty, doleful, hunger.

The village had changed so much during the winter that it was a dreadful sight to see. The wattle fencing had disappeared, gardens were sparse, enormous holes gaped here and there in the empty, half-battered peasant outbuildings—the kulaks houses were dead and the hay from their roofs had long been taken out for feeding the livestock of the "community sector;" the yards had turned green with grass, without having any pathways; the dogs did not bark, the cows and bulls did not bellow about the yards; the pigs did not grunt; the sheep did not bleat, and only the scrawny cockerels, who'd been pecking at the young grass, managed to let out a pitiful, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

It was a joyless spring, and a terrible one. Out there in the fields an ox fell, and out there a kolkhoz worker offered his soul to God. But no one answered for the kolkhoz worker's death, but about the oxen or the horses—there were snatching muziks—"Kulak's sabotage!" and muzik disappeared...

Since early morning Kurilchenko had been running around the fields, organizing the work and taking notes. By evening, after gathering the brigades for the productivity meeting, he—along with the partorg—"scoured them with sand" and "educated" the starving peasants.

At last the frenzied fieldwork came to an end. A period of respite began—a short break—so essential for the people and the animals. The people from the fields were ferried in to help the collective farm garden and garden plots. Nobody knew where to go or what to do since the chairman was muddled with this new, large farm holding, and could not sort the work in order of priority. They barely managed to do it also here, in the plots and gardens, and where they couldn't finish, the grass had sprouted. The weeds campaign had arrived.

The chairman's previous hopes of meeting with Marfa Ganenko resurfaced with renewed vigor. He thought about where would be most convenient to meet the girl; where to send her to do the weeding so she'd be alone, so that his meeting her would remain a secret from the gossip mongering village.

Far away from the collective farm a crop of winter wheat had turned green. The

tall weeds quickly ran amuck and the feeble shoots were barely evident. The place was out of the way, there were no dwellings close by for many versts<sup>4</sup>—only the unfolding of the steppe and the towering blue sky. At one time, not far away, there had been the Sudarnikov farmstead but now barely a few traces of it remained. During the winter all the farmstead owners had been sent to the North, and the peasant houses and outbuildings disappeared soon after the departed farmers and now only the thick grass hid the remains of human inhabitation. It was here that the sly collective farm chairman decided to send Marfa Ganenko. He thought that there she wouldn't be able to get away from him—whether she liked it or not, she would love him.

The day before the first weeding, he coordinated with Rudnitsky the collective farm production work plan and boldly read it out to the collective farm workers.

When Marfusha heard that she was to go seven verst away to weed she asked the chairman, "How can it be that all others are in the brigades and I have to go alone and to such a distant spot?"

"You know, comrade Ganenko, you don't have to give us orders. The plan has been worked out with the partorg and it's impossible for us to change it. There's not much work to do there. Start by yourself then we'll send you some assistance."

Marfusha grasped that the destination had been deliberately fixed—she wanted to say something but Kurilchenko interrupted her, "What—do you want to shirk yourself out of work? The politically aware collective farm worker silently obeys the production plan because he knows that it is the law—and you wish to turn to kulak's sabotage? Do you know what it smells of?"

A reminder about kulak's sabotage forced the girl to keep silent. She didn't sleep all night, the whole night she thought over and over about what she should do. It'd be all right if this business was only Kurilchenko's, but if it was the secretary's too...

"Oh God, why was I born like this? Why is it that a handsome man can simply be happy, and someone like me—a girl—should have to suffer?... Stepan was right... We should have got married... But would that really have saved us?... Lizaveta Goncharenko is married—and lives with a brigade leader because she's afraid... She says herself, "Well, young women, one has to save own lives, and in whose care I can leave my little children?... And her husband knows... But keeps quiet... They are, evidently, all like that those party members..."

That morning, at first light, the girl was already weeding the sparse winter crop. Thistle and pierey hid the tender, thin stalks of wheat. Choked by the tall weeds they looked like pitiful half-grown plants with pale, greenish tinge. Bent under the thick grass, Marfusha pulled out weeds and took them to the edge of the boundary. For the first time she felt terrified to be alone in the field, and she did not notice the warm sunshine or the song of the far away birds; she could not rejoice in the fresh air of the steppe and the green of the fields did not fondle her; she was not drawn to the enigmatic edge of the world—horizon. She trembled and in the boundlessness of the steppe she lent an attentive ear to the melancholy silence of nature. She was catching the barely audible sound of the wood-lark, that seemed to her as a song of sorrow... It was gone that free life of broad fields. Even here, where there was not a single soul as far as the eye could see, she felt constrained, trapped, and the azure blue of the high sky pressed down on her like a heavy load...

"God help me!" she whispered, and her eyes shined with wet, large tears.



Suddenly someone clasped her with hands from behind, dragged her along the soil and threw her onto the ground, leaning all his weight on top of her, "Kurilchenko! I'll kill you!.. I'll strangle you!.." she cried, wrenching herself from the frenzied chairman and beating him off with a pungent thistle.

Kurilchenko grabbed her by the hands and pinned them down, searching for her lips with his. Marfusha was shaking her head, trying to tear away her hands, and shouted, "I'll bite you! Get off me, you impudent!.. Don't touch me!.. I'll strangle you!.." And finally freeing her hand tried to grab him around the throat.

The chairman grabbed her hands again, pinned them down, lowered his head, pressed the girl's face into his own, and began to persuade her, "Why are you so furious, you fool? You didn't want it on the good terms, now ...you see, you are all in my hands! Well, what's wrong with you? That's the women's job and there's no use for you to swagger. It's obvious you're still a fool... Don't understand anything..."

While Kurilchenko was calmly persuading, Marfusha paused for breath, but sensing that the talk was ending she gathered all her strength, darted from under him and, freeing her hands, she pushed him aside. Jumping to her feet she ran to the boundary, grabbed a rock that was lying there and halted, "Don't come near me, you filth!.. Don't you come near!.. I'll kill you!.. I won't let you live! You've already had it from Rudnitsky, now you'll get it worse!"

Kurilchenko got up. He wanted to go up to her once again but her screaming and, even more so, the rock that she held in her hand, stopped him.

"Don't come close!.. Don't you come close to me!.. I'll take a sin on my soul... I'll kill you!.. Either way, with you—there's no life for me..."

"What's up with you girl? You're stupid, can't take a bit of petting... This isn't serious... I'm trying on good terms and you act like a mad woman... you're stupid..." babbled Kurilchenko, half-confused, half-offended.

"Well go petting someone else, and don't touch me!.. There's lots of your kind... dogs in heat!.. You show your cultural standards—the Party's..."

"Don't you touch the Party, Marfa! The Party, one could say, saved your life... because you should be in Siberia! Never forget that, pretty girl... and think about your fate... Siberia is still not far off from you! So choose—either me, or the North—to your kulaks. I can save your life and you can have a pleasure..."

"Go to Rudnitsky... ask him first... Maybe he doesn't let you?"

"Don't talk about Rudnitsky to me..."

"Rudnitsky himself told me to remember if you pester me," lied Marfusha.

This was a surprise to Kurilchenko.

"Well, well... Don't you play pranks!"

"Go and ask him yourself! And if not, I'll tell him about today myself, so that he will remind you..."

"You better start working. What are you standing for?.. You're not paid for your workdays for nothing..."

"And it's best for you to leave here... you mangy dog..."

"You... you... a little less harsh..."

"Go, I'm telling you, Rudnitsky will be more harsh..."

"You, Marfa, look, don't go to Rudnitsky... That was a joke..."

"I'm going to ask you... go on your way, Chairman!" finished Marfa with vicious

irony and went to her field.

Kurilchenko stood there for a while, marked time, and with a face filthy from the dirty weeds, made his way back to other plots.

That evening Rudnitsky asked him, "And where is the young Ganenko working?"

Kurilchenko got scared. "On the seventh plot of land, not far from the Sudarikov's farmstead..."

"Assign her to begin white-washing my apartment for tomorrow."

The matter was mysterious. The chairman said nothing, asked nothing but made the assignment.

The assignment confused Marfusha... there weren't enough people for weeding and yet now she was assigned to white-wash the partorg's apartment!

"It's obvious that Rudnitsky is waiting for an answer", she thought. "But with him, of course, it's more scary. He's answerable to no one. And it's not as easy to escape from his grasp. He's a healthy, substantial and strong muzhik—and he has overflowing strength. But it's impossible to ignore the chairman's order. If I don't obey, not only will I be destroyed, but my father and mother will be too."

In the morning Marfusha found the partorg at home.

"Well, girl, what you have to say to me today?"

"The chairman sent me to white-wash..."

"There's no hurry for that. And as regards to what I spoke to you about last time—have you thought about it?"

"What can I think? There's work to do... There's no time to think at work..."

"Work is not a wolf—it won't escape into the forest. So speak to me about this matter."

"To speak about what matter?" asked Marfa, as if she couldn't guess what the partorg wanted to talk to her about. "Our matter is work..."

"Stop fooling me with smooth talk, beautiful. You know yourself why you're here!"

"I was sent here to white-wash—that's why I came here..."

"White-wash, white-wash! Better tell me what have you decided? That we're going to arrange everything amicably, or that you go to Siberia, to join your relations?"

"Why do you pester me, comrade Rudnitsky? Aren't there enough women for you in the collective farm? Maybe one of them will agree amicably."

"I don't need another..."

"Well, don't touch me..."

"No, my dear, you're not going to leave here like that!" exclaimed the flashing-with-anger partorg, he grabbed the girl and threw her down on the bed...

Marfusha strained herself to breaking point trying to resist. She scratched Rudnitsky's face; bit him, defended herself with her arms and legs until, from exhaustion, she lost consciousness...

When she came to her senses, she saw over her the partorg's bloodshot eyes; his blood-stained physiognomy; and felt his disgusting breath. A sense of incredible fatigue and indifference enveloped her.

"You see, beautiful, everything is settled... Now you've nothing to be afraid of... And I won't forget you... and life will be good for you now in the collective farm," crooned Rudnitsky in a sickly-sweet voice.

Marfusha began to shake. Partorg was repulsive to her, she wanted to push him

off her so she wouldn't have to see his fat, contented physiognomy, but sensed that she hadn't the strength.

As Rudnitsky prepared to leave, he continued to talk, "There, now you'll be able to live like a worthy collective farm worker... Should have done so long time before... and to think that you were putting on airs and graces!.. This is women's business, Marfusha. Nature has designed it that way... Now don't you hurry with work. There's no hurry... It can be done tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. I will appoint you as a cleaning woman in the office building—you will live like that! I'll treat you well, because with the collective farm workdays your body won't prosper!.. So that's it... now you lie down for a while, relax. If you want don't start today... But I've got to go... Because I've got work to do." And partorg left the house.

Marfusha lay motionless with closed eyes. She heard nothing. She gradually became aware that, at last, something terrible had happened, what she had been most afraid of from what she had been running from for so long. But the power had gained the upper hand. The most precious thing in her life had been taken away from her—her maidenly honor. She had been disgraced, debased, tainted with filth. She could no longer suppress pent up pain in her soul and broke out into loud sobs. She curled herself into a ball and, with her whole body shaking, she screamed out curses until in a weary silence she fixed her senseless eyes on one point, as they shone with the tears that had been accumulating this whole time.

Tranquility slowly returned to her, overcoming the deep, heavy suffering and she grew pensive.

What now? She was already disgraced. How could she escape from these hounds? Tell her mother? Or Stepan? What could they do? How could they help her now? It was too late... She began to work but the stubborn thoughts searched for a way out of the situation she'd ended up in.

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Unexpectedly, a commission from the regional center disrupted the normal life of the collective farm and wrecked all the plans of the two men that were contending for Marfusha's love.

While inspecting the collective farm the commission completely and utterly broke down its leadership because of unproductiveness and bad organization of the work in the fields, for not fulfilling the plan for crop planting and for the bad state of the livestock.

On the general meeting a representative of the Oblispolkom—Oblast Executive Committee—and the Obkom—Oblast Committee—of the Party were not shy about their remarks towards the collective farm leaders, and Kurilchenko and Rudnitsky's names were blackened so much that the collective farm workers grew bolder and began to talk about their abuses of power. One person spoke about the wrongful use of the work force, indicating on the white-washing of the partorg's quarters, while at the time there were not enough hands to weed the fields.

The commission hushed the collective farm workers but in a closed party meeting both leaders were strongly reprimanded.

Marfusha was no longer herself. Neither her melodic voice, nor her ringing laugh, were anywhere to be heard. She no longer sang her favorite sorrowful songs. Nowhere

and to no one did she reveal a single word. She would arrive for work at the collective farm, silently work her allotted time, then leave. Even her movements became sluggish and somehow indecisive. She would start doing something then suddenly stop, fix her eyes on one spot, and stand until someone would call, "And are you going to receive your workdays, girl? What are you standing around for when people around you are bathed in sweat?"

Flinching, Marfa would resume her work.

She'd arrive home, sit herself down in some corner and be silent, motionless, staring at one point.

"There's something not right with Marfusha," noticed Fedor Kuzmich somehow.

"Yes I've noticed it too... I don't know what it could be," answered Maria Timofeyevna.

"Do you think perhaps someone has forced himself on her?"

"Oh God, don't let that be. Fedor, she's a modest girl; she stays home and doesn't wander the streets..."

"But who knows these days? Now we're in the collective farm, Maria. You talk to her. Mothers are good at that sort of thing."

Although Maria Timofeyevna knew about her daughter's love for Stepan, she never thought that he would ever do something bad. Nevertheless, the conversation with her daughter began with him.

While Fedor Kuzmich was not home, she asked her, "What's wrong, Marfusha, do you feel miserable?"

"It's nothing, Mama," the girl quietly replied.

"What's Stepan... isn't he going to marry you?"

"Don't know, Mama..."

"The time is closer to autumn... It's time to send the matchmakers, if he's serious."

"I don't know, Mama..."

"Why don't you know? No doubt you've spoken about this? It's not to continue just girlish love... Your years are already such to think about marriage... You meet him, see him..."

"I don't see him, Mama..."

"What happened? Did you break up?"

"I don't know, Mama..."

"How come you don't know? Who knows if you don't?"

"Don't know, Mama..."

"Marfusha... tell me... Has something happened to you?.. Has someone assaulted you?.. Offended you?.. If so, we will seek justice... There is a court for this..."

Marfusha was silent, she didn't move from her place, she still stared at one spot, as though she couldn't hear her mother.

Maria Timofeyevna sighed and when she had the opportunity she told her husband.

"The girl has been raped!" concluded Fedor Kuzmich.

Maria Timofeyevna did not restrain herself from telling her husband about Marfusha's old love.

"Stepan, you say?" he asked repeatedly. "That's only half the problem. We will

seek justice.”

“I’ve just told you about this word, Fedya. But I don’t think he could have corrupted the girl. He’s not the type.”

But Fedor Kuzmich met Stepan on that very day and spoke with him, “So, Stepan, what are you thinking of doing about Marfusha?”

Stepan remained calm “I’m waiting for the word from Marfusha, Fedor Kuzmich, although I’m ready right now.”

“Tell me straight—have you hurt the girl?”

Stepan rested his gray eyes on Fedor Kuzmich and, looking directly into his face, answered, “I speak in front of God, Fedor Kuzmich, I haven’t raised a finger on her,” he said and made the sign of the cross on his chest. “For me to have done something like that to the girl—My God! What are you talking about. Yes, I would hold her in my arms... She’s so... No-o-o, Fedor Kuzmich...”

Stepan spoke so sincerely that Fedor Kuzmich was left without a shadow of a doubt.

“Look,” he said to him, “It’s not yet clear what has happened to the girl...”

“All I know is that she started to avoid me... And if I saw or spoke to her, she’d be silent—she wouldn’t say a word...”

“No, Maria,” Fedor Kuzmich informed his wife, “I spoke with Stepan. He swore, he vowed that he’s innocent... And he spoke in such a way that it was impossible not to believe him. He’d marry her straight away... Yes Marfusha got depressed... and doesn’t speak to him... just like at home he couldn’t get a word out of her... She runs away from him...”

And Fedor Kuzmich began to recollect everything about the collective farm life, all the collective farm gossips, he began to listen to the conversations, faint allusions and innuendoes of the fellow villagers, and reached the conclusion that the matter was at the hands of either the chairman or the partorg secretary.

By the same means, Stepan had arrived to the conclusion that either Rudnitsky or Kurilchenko had harmed Marfa. He burned up inside, but what could he possibly do? There was no way of taking revenge—he was too weak to fight with such people—that could only bring more disaster. And he knew very well that they only barely put up with Ganenko in the collective farm, and one careless move could decide the fate of the whole family. There was only one thing for it—to marry Marfusha, concealing this bitter grievance together with her. And so one day he asked Maria Timofeyevna to send the girl to him.

Her mother was overjoyed and without waiting long she got down to persuading her, “If only you’d get married with Stepan, Marfusha. He misses you...”

“I don’t know,” Marfusha answered quietly and indifferently.

“What is there to know? A young man is waiting for you and you are not going out. He’s already asked me and all you can say is, ‘Don’t know’. Go, my sweet, perhaps you find out... Maybe we can arrange the wedding...”

“I don’t know, Mama,” and in her tone was heard so much deep sorrow that Maria Timofeyevna eyes filled with tears, which she inconspicuously dried so that her daughter would not see.

“Go on, my daughter. Go on, my sweet. What are you tormenting yourself and forcing the young man to suffer?”

"Okay then, I will, Mama..." answered Marfusha in a monotone and quietly left the house.

Her mother crossed herself, went to the window and watched the white silhouette of her daughter as it slowly moved off into the darkness. And she was glad that Marfusha had gone to Stepan, and prayed to God for her, "God, save the poor girl, set her on the path of righteousness!..."

"How are you, Marfusha?" Stepan met her rapturously but at the same time cautiously.

"How do you do, Stepan," she answered in the same distant and monotone voice with which she'd answered her mother.

"What's wrong? You don't even smile... We haven't seen each other in so long. Have you perhaps fallen out of love with me?"

Marfusha was silent.

"What's wrong? Tell me, don't be sorrowful... It's painful for me... Has someone hurt you? Tell me... Don't torment me..."

Marfusha was silent.

"Marfushenka, don't be so sad, don't grieve... I am suffering along with you; it's no easier for my heart... Tell me all of your grievances... No matter what happened, I will never turn my back on you... You'll always be my beautiful girl, I'll always love you just the same... I have no life without you... My dearest, don't be miserable... Don't be silent... tell me, even just a word..."

Marfusha remained silent...

"I know it's difficult for you... Well, don't tell me then... forget it all... And I won't bring it up again... will you forget?"

Stepan embraced the girl tenderly and gently kissed her, but she sat motionless, like a statue, and watched the darkness of the night draw in.

"You don't kiss me... you've completely forgotten... fallen out of love..."

"No, Styopa," the girl uttered quietly.

"So what has happened?... Why have you become like this?..."

Marfusha remained silent.

"Marfushen'ka, my own, let's get married and forget everything... Now the time is right... we just need to send for the matchmaker."

Marfusha remained silent.

"Shall we arrange an autumn wedding? We will live happily. I'll not allow anyone to give you pain. You're my sunshine, my happiness I'll give my whole life to you!"

Until daybreak Stepan talked, begged, implored, but Marfusha's unyielding silence was only broken now and then with a quiet, single-toned "I don't know."

Fedor Kuzmich and Maria Timofeyevna did not sleep, and when the girl arrived home they tensely watched her every move, which were so slow and uncertain. Marfusha carefully felt her way to her bed and, without undressing, lay down.

"No," whispered Fedor Kuzmich. "Stepan can't help either."

In the morning he met with Stepan.

"Well, Stepan?"

"She remained silent, Fedor Kuzmich..."

"Silent," ...repeated Fedor Kuzmich blankly. "Try Stepa, try to talk her out of it... You are our last hope..."

"Fedor Kuzmich, I'm prepared to give her my soul... She's silent if only she'd say one word. She was wronged, what you saying is true... I can make a guess—the chairman or the partorg... but I won't wrest it out of her... She doesn't speak... If only we could know for certain who it was..."

"And then what?"

Stepan, in that moment, felt that he could resolve everything. Vengeance for his lovely girl burned inside him and already could not be stopped for anything and he said decisively, "I will give my life, Fedor Kuzmich. I won't let them go unpunished for this..."

"Don't bother with them, Styopa."

"And why say nothing?... Isn't what they've done to the people enough?... And yet they mock our girls! That Katya Yurkova—she's already walking about pregnant, and who's guilty? She herself is afraid to say because she knows, Fedor Kuzmich, that she has to remain silent. And it's no better for the married women... but what am I talking to you about this for! As if you don't know it yourself... They get up to it with everyone... And only try to say something... Right away one becomes kulak and goes straight to Siberia!..."

Several times during that long, drawn-out summer, Marfusha—obliged by her mother—went out at night to the garden plots and met with Stepan, but was still just as quiet or simply repeated her "Don't know."

Fedor Kuzmich and Maria Timofeyevna suffered no less than Stepan. All searched for a way to save the girl; all wanted to break the wall of silence, with which Marfusha had cut herself off from the outside world, with which she hid her grief—her awful secret—but all of their efforts were in vain.

Sinister words crept around the village:

"She's been with someone!"

"She's nearly due!"

"The girl is swollen!"

"She's getting fat on collective farm food!..."

And the village need only to catch on. They began to ruminate and chew it over and over, "With whom? Where and when?"—but even here were only guesses, and the led also to Rudnitsky and Kurilchenko.

Both men knew of the new life, which had begun—Marfusha and Rudnitsky, but they never spoke about it. Rudnitsky, in general, after the investigation of the collective farm by the Regional Commission, had avoided meeting the girl for a long time and Marfusha always tried to slip away from the partorg.

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At the peak of the field crop work the chairman lined up the brigade for the garden plots, "Pick up tomatoes and quickly send them to the town!" he ordered, strictly the brigade leader. "Pick the cleanest and move on quickly because this is an urgent matter... It's an order from the Town Party Committee. Hurry, understand?"

All the women were sent to the garden plots. Marfusha unhurriedly took the ripe tomatoes and placed them in the large wicker basket. Her fellow workers at the side of her worked, furtively ate the tomatoes, talked loudly and laughed even louder. Marfusha didn't hear what her friends were talking about. Her gaze was concentrated on some moving point, from which she was not able to avert her eyes. What was happening in

her soul? What was she thinking at that moment? What did the girl want to decide? Her gaze into space revealed nothing but it was clear that she was bearing some heavy burden.

Kurilchenko arrived. He'd continued to watch and pursue Marfusha and now he made a beeline to her, "What is it, Ganenko?—have you come here to work or to have a stroll? Look how many tomatoes you've left on the plants! Who's going to clean up after you? You don't have your farmhands here! This is not kulak's agriculture! Is it already difficult to bend down with your belly?"

Marfusha straightened up and sensed at that moment that something in her belly turned over, stirred... She turned around and began to run towards the tall ledge under which there was a black, deep whirlpool. The kolkhoz women froze. Someone shouted shrilly, "Women! She's going to drown herself!"

And while they were grasping this, Marfusha ran to the edge and disappeared...

Everyone ran to the bank. Large circles dispersed in the water and one could only guess which spot the girl had jumped into.

Rather than jumping into the water himself to begin searching, Kurilchenko went in the direction of the collective farm building to report to partorg Rudnitsky.

Rudnitsky listened carefully and decided, "You won't drag her out alive anyway, and we should not tear the people away from their work. Time is costly now. It's impossible to lose even a minute..."

"But, at least we'll have to put the old men on duty, comrade Rudnitsky. They might ask at the inquest..."

"Inquest?" grinned the partorg. "You know, comrade Kurilchenko, she would have died anyway in Siberia... You'd do better now to submit the matter about the old Ganenko—that will be an inquest for you, understand?"

However hard the chairman was, however heartless, now something spoke to him and he, turning to the exit, shouted at the partorg, "You bawdy have desecrated that girl and now—you don't want to drag the ends from the water!.. I'll round up the muzhiks myself!"

But he never got to round up the men, as the women of the garden plot had carried the heavy news around the fields and the kolkhozniks were already running from every side. Many of them already had chains and boat hooks, with the help of which they could draw out the drowned.

Marfusha disappeared. Maria Timofeyevna fell down to the ground and lay there without moving. Fedor Kuzmich and Stepan stood near each other and looked into the quiet, smooth surface of the black pool. They stood in silence, without tears, until everyone had left.

"You see, Stepan, I had a daughter..." finally uttered the old man.

"Fedor Kuzmich, I won't let them live!" cried out Stepan in a state of frenzy, and disappeared.

While the kolkhozniks searched for the drowned body, Rudnitsky himself was concocting a plan against old Ganenko and went immediately to the town.

He returned at dusk. After returning his horse in the kolkhoz stable, he went out to the kolkhoz courtyard, and stopping at the edge of the fathomless ravine where the kolkhozniks threw their dung, he smoked and pondered. A few steps away from him the ground came abruptly down...



The stars were already twinkling high in the sky. Amidst the quiet, the enigmatic sound of the insects rang out; now and then a horse's snore drifted from the stable; an owl hooted somewhere; a bat darted by overhead like a vague shadow... Night... It was as though the whole village was dead. There were heard no young, impassioned, friendly songs, nor the babble of young men and girls, or any free—like the steppe—rolling of laughter; or the gentle strumming of a skilful harmonica player; or the soft tread of deft and strong legs, lifting the light roadside dust in an intricate folk dance... Silence... Not even a hound's bark from these rare visitors to the peasant courtyard... A kind of strange, heavy, oppressive, stifling gloom shrouded the village and in this gloom the life of the people was not lived fully, but merely glimmered, ready to be extinguished at any moment...

Rudnitsky stood and smoked cigarette after cigarette. In front of him there was a black ravine. Sometime, in the years of the revolution, when the civil war was raging, by the decree of the Village Revolutionary Committee, here they pushed off the grabby, loathed bourgeoisie and officers, who had stolen their way through the village to the Don. Kurilchenko—who had spontaneously fulfilled the orders of the Revkom—would talk about this. How many human lives has this dark monster devoured? How many human bones rotted in its unfathomable depths..?

"No, it needs to be filled up," thought Rudnitsky, although he knew that there would never be enough dung in the kolkhoz so that, even over the years, it would be possible to level the bottom with the earth.

"Aha! There you are... murderer!" whispered Stepan, carefully sneaking up on the partorg. And at that very moment, just as Rudnitsky wanted to turn around to go home, he leapt towards him and pushed him into the abyss.

That night GPU<sup>5</sup> agents took away old Ganenko.

The following morning the village was in disarray. Fedor Kuzmich Ganenko had disappeared, but partorg Rudnitsky had also disappeared. The chairman of the kolkhoz, Kurilchenko, after dispatching everyone to work, left only the party members for a closed party meeting. Appointing a courier, he sent him to town with a message about the Partorg's disappearance. After the meeting he stationed all the members around the allotments, with strict instructions to watch every kolkhoznik, but he himself sat tight in the office building.

The door creaked. Kurilchenko slowly lifted his head. In the threshold stood Stepan.

"What do you want?"

"I know... where Rudnitsky is."

"Where?"

"Come, I'll show you..."

The chairman of the kolkhoz stood and followed Stepan. As he approached the ravine, Stepan said, "Come, from this point you can see very well..."

Kurilchenko approached the precipice but just as he leaned over to peep at the murky depths he flew headlong in, not managing to emit a single sound...

An automobile arrived at the kolkhoz courtyard. Two GPU agents got out and made their way to the village office. In Rudnitsky's office sat Stepan.

"Where's the chairman?" one of them asked.

"The same place as the Partorg," answered Stepan, calmly.

The agent, who knew about Rudnitsky's disappearance, immediately understood who was sitting here before them.

"And where is Rudnitsky?"

Stepan led them to the precipice and there he related the terrible tale about his love. Within the hour he was leaving his home village with the GPU agents...

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Dawn had just broken. Along the dusty road leading from the village walked a crooked old woman with a knapsack on her shoulders. Her head was downcast and tears shone in her eyes...

As she walked away from the village the woman stopped, turned her head to the river; made the sign of the cross, sighed deeply and—turning around—hurried along the road. There was nothing left for her in the village...

## The Steppe Is Calling

The sixteenth day of his trip in a closed railroad car found Mark Leshchenko especially restless. It seemed to him that the guards were about to start looking through the cars at the stops—whether the doors were locked, whether the hatches were tightened up, whether the prisoners were cutting holes in the floor or the walls of the cars, whether the roofs were intact. But fortunately, that day the train was traveling almost without stops. The prisoners did not even receive their regular rations. And judging by the limited signs that filtered from the outside into the dark car, it was possible to assume that it was getting toward evening.

How could he not be restless when the hatch, very tightly screwed shut by thick wire, was finally supposed to be open tonight. After all, it was last night when Mark realized that, one more effort, and he could find himself outside of these loathsome car walls, the dwellers of which not only were starving and freezing, but also literally dying from exhaustion.

Thinking about his companions in misfortune, Leshchenko was always taken aback by how others had reconciled with their lot so passively. Why had no one of them decided to risk an escape? If it were several people joined together, they could have freed themselves from the suffering that they had to endure. What was it? The fear of death? But to try to evade imminent death in the concentration camp, they had to put their lives at stake right now. He did not find an answer, but he was grateful to his fellow prisoners that they had promised to keep quiet about the escape that he had been planning.

"You, Mark, can do whatever you want to, but do it in such a way that we would not know anything about it," said the bearded uncle Saveliy, a sturdy peasant from the same village as Mark.

And Mark, indeed, kept doing it all in a way that nobody knew it. In the night, when everyone was asleep, flocking together to keep warm, he would quietly get up to the hatch and spend the best part of the night trying to unwind the wire that was burning his fingers with frost.

Thin streaks of light in the doors and hatches of the car started to fade. Evening was approaching. The train continued to move forward, slowing its pace from time to time. The wheels bumped unevenly under the car. From time to time the clatter of the couplings or the rattle of the bumpers were heard. Hungry people were getting ready to sleep.

"Haven't eaten today..." someone in the dark said.

Mark knew that it was Vasiliy Ivanovich, once a stout man, who was now only skin and bones.

"You see some landowner is found here!"

"Serve him a two-course dinner!"

"What did you think, uncle Vasiliy, when your land is empty? Where can you get some food?"

'They will bring it from the 'Father'<sup>1</sup> himself!"

"Hey you-u-u!" Vasiliy Ivanovich drawled, "What a hubbub you started! It is not me, fellas, who wants to eat, it is my belly."

"Tighten it up with a belt," someone advised.

"No belt, brothers, 'comrades-in-arms'<sup>2</sup> took the belt too..."

"Likely they would now distribute belts with coupons?"<sup>3</sup>

"Or, maybe, Stalin ripped his belt and needs now a more sturdy one—a muzhik's belt?"

"What is a matter with you!" shouted Adeynikov, a peasant from the neighboring village. "It is time for good people to go to sleep, and you are blabbering like hens!"

"That's true—fall asleep and forget about the hunger," Vasiliy Ivanovich concluded.

Out of fifty people crowded into the car at the boarding, only thirty-two remained. The rest were dragged out "to the dump" during the trip. Fewer people remained, and everyone was trying to gather in the front section of the car because there were fewer drafts from the doors. Leshchenko, on the contrary, kept to himself at the other corner. He knew that in an hour or an hour-and-a-half he could start his work, therefore, he patiently lay down on the cold floor.

For some time he could hear conversations that filtered through the train's metal clanking sounds, but soon the people fell asleep and he could hear only snoring coming from their side.

Mark listened to the train's run and when he was sure that a stop would not happen soon, quietly got up to the hatch. He opened all the latches, pressed the metal surface, and squeezed his hand through the created opening. The frost was biting his fingers, but he was so engrossed in his work that it seemed that he did not feel cold and continued to untwist the wire. According to his calculations, he was supposed to finish in two or three hours and then... Oh, if only the hatch were not to squeak, if only it were not to open with a noise, were not to slam into the car wall!

Mark Leshchenko was almost correct in his calculations. After midnight he felt that the hatch was giving in, and, if not for his hand put in the hole between it and the car, it could fall down with a lot of noise. Mark started to slowly lower the iron shutter, which he easily laid down on the twisted wire, but it softly creaked while swinging from the wire. He removed his hand and started to listen. The train was slowly going uphill. The locomotive was puffing somewhere in the distance ahead, the cars were clacking rhythmically. The opening gleamed bright in the night, and it made him tremble. Yes! Now it was freedom or death!

"No, it is freedom!" Mark whispered, slowly crossed himself trice, making a sweeping cross, and turning his head to the sleeping people, quietly said, "Goodbye, brothers! God, hear my prayers..."

He pulled himself up to the window. Heavy snow was falling and hiding from view everything in the distance. Poking his head in the opening, he started groping for the roof. After getting hold of the edge, he climbed higher and higher... And now he was leaning on the window with his stomach, trying to get a better grip of the roof's rim. When he was sure that his hand would not let go of the metal bend above the hatch, he began to turn on his back, grabbing the slippery ledge. Several more pulls, and he finally, slowly, climbed onto the snow-covered top surface of the car.

The snow is blinding. All around – the flowing light of whiteout. It is impossible to look straight ahead—the wind pushes soft snowflakes into the face. Leshchenko notices that the train is turning on a curve to the left and decides to jump to the right. He carefully stands up to get to the opposite side of the roof.

In the brakeman's cabin whose peak is above the car's roof a guard sits; he is wearing a warm leather jacket, a fur cap with ear flaps, and felt boots. He is trying to stay awake because the area that they are passing through is famous among the guards for being the most dangerous one—the break-outs happen often here. If you overlook it, you won't be forgiven! "And because of whom? To suffer because of some kulak?"<sup>4</sup> No, I ought not to sleep!" And he frequently looks through the cabin's tiny glass window or opens the door to check the roofs of the cars through a shroud of snow, or comes down the footboard to look along the train.

Suddenly he heard an indistinct sound coming from the car roof. He looked into the window, but could not make out anything. The sound was repeated. He opened the door and saw a man on the roof of his car. The guard grabbed the rifle, but then immediately decided, "I will capture him alive!" and started to steal quietly towards the fugitive.

Leshchenko was calm. He did not see the cabin located at the front of the car. The dense snow was hiding it. When he was ready to jump, he felt someone seize him by the collar of the sheepskin coat and start to pull him down on the roof.

Mark began to stand up to the assailant, but the well-fed and strong guard leaned at him with his whole weight at once, whispering hatefully, "He-e-e-y-y! Ba-a-stard!.. Kulak's mug!.. Decided to escape!.. I'm gonna... Alive... Alive!.. Mongrel dog!.. You are not running away on me!" And he tried to crawl with the fugitive towards the cabin.

Leshchenko, briefly immobilized by the unexpectedness of the onslaught, let the guard feel that he did not have any strength left for resistance, but several minutes after that he suddenly wrenched his hand from the guard's enormous paw in its warm mitten and, gripping him by the throat, clenched his fingers as hard as he could, without letting the guard collect himself. The guard started wheezing, and some time after that Mark was making his way from under the heavy body of his enemy.

The train slowed down again, still turning to the left. Leshchenko pulled the guard's body to the left edge of the roof, pushed him off, and ran towards the right side of the car and jumped...

It seemed to him that he was flying down for a very long time. He could make out the sound of shots and the train whistle, and then plunged into the soft snow mass.

He sat for a long time under the thick white cover, without feeling cold from the snow that got under his clothes. A hollow in the snow, like a bear's lair, started to form from his breath. It was dark; probably even daylight did not reach here. It was even getting warmer. Suddenly he heard a faint whistle of the train that reached his ear from somewhere far away.

"They were searching," Mark thought, "God helped!" And remembering the strangled guard, quietly whispered, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinful man..."

Having spent some more time in his hideaway, he began to slowly climb up. This turned out to be a difficult task. He had to use his whole body to push through the thickness of snow. The higher he got, the easier it became to push through the cold mass. He stopped from time to time, listened to the silence and rested, until finally he

got out to the barely rolling but mostly flat land. He was met by the dawn and an unusual quietness of the wild nature. He needed to quickly get far away from the railroad. Fortunately for him, the snowfall was slowing, and in the still hazy light of the beginning new day he could make out a high railway embankment stretching before him, perhaps as an insurmountable barrier. It was getting lighter and brighter... He had to hurry.

Mark turned his back on the railroad and went towards the forest looming dark in the distance. Walking was difficult. The feet sank in the deep snow, over and over again. He came across ruts, shallow cavities, but he strained with all his strength to flee as fast as possible far away from this dangerous place.

The streak of light in the east had already taken over the whole sky, when he entered into the first trees of the huge forest. Leshchenko turned around and saw the curved dark lines dimly looming at the horizon.

"What kind of place is this?" he thought, "Is it the mountains? Where did they bring the people? And what a forest... You would not see like this in our place..." He remembered his village in the deep south of Russia. "It feels weird here... Forest and mountains..."

Slowly making his way among the trees, he realized that he now could walk fearlessly—there was no footpath, no human footprints, only few animal traces imprinted on the snow and the flight of birds were the signs of life.

The forest was getting denser; he was surrounded by trees of such girth that a man could hardly stretch his arms around them and they did not look like the trees Mark had known in his native place. But the windbreak of the forest could not protect it from itself and now and then a windfall tree lay across his path. Try to get over it! So what, here is freedom, and you will jump over even a bigger wood block for it. And everything here is odd. Over here, in the snow, there is a bright green tree, there—a strange animal effortlessly climbing up the tree, a bird sadly sings somewhere—a land out of a fairy tale, nothing could be made—head or tail—out of it. "But what are the people like?..."

He had been hungry for quite some time, but Leshchenko was trying to get further from the railroad when he heard a far-distant whistle of a train running echoing in the tree tops, and he decided, "I am going to walk three more miles, then will look for something to eat."

Tired, he could hardly move his feet, moved forward with great effort. Sometimes he came across glades, and then he moved quicker; sometimes he went up the hill or down the hill, and marveled at the uneven land, so different from his native steppe.

By now he had walked his three miles and started to get a better look at the trees. Fir tree, pine, oak, alder and several others were familiar to him, but there were many species that he had never seen before. At first he tried to pull the bark from a tree and chew it. But it was hard and bitter. Then he started looking for acorns. However, almost all of them had dropped in the fall and he could find only a few on the bare trees or on the snow. He tried to chew them, but they were as hard rocks. Nevertheless, he collected several acorns, put them in his pocket and turned to the bark again. He was walking and chewing until he came to the edge of the forest. An extensive valley lay below, but he could see no human dwellings.

"One could die here," Mark thought, "There isn't only no place to eat, but there will not be a place to sleep! So what, at least I am free! Will die by myself." But immediately

his inner voice started to protest, "Why are you thinking about dying?! You got lucky from the first attempt, from the first step... You should not die!.. Does not God see me?.. Don't forget Him, and you will be saved!"

This way he was walking the whole day along the forest's edge and only very late at night he saw a yellowish light between the trees. The light spot flickered, getting lost behind the trunks, appearing again, and Mark, sensing the human lodging, was making enormous efforts to get to the dwelling as soon as possible.

He bravely approached a small cabin and knocked on the small window. In a minute the door opened and a man appeared on the porch.

"Well, well, where were you, my good man, were you were carried off? Methinks, you were wander around a long time?"

"Give me a shelter, kind man," Mark said, approaching the cabin owner.

"Why not, God will shelter you, and you can enter at once... But it is not the best of times..."

Mark entered the cabin. In a big room chips were burning. At the icons in the corner there was a table on which a dead man lay in the coffin.

"See, my good man, God sheltered my son..."

Mark crossed himself.

"Good Lord, bless the house of my kind host, and grant the Kingdom of Heaven to this dead man," and he crossed himself again.

"Nyura," the host called a woman lying on a big metal bed, "make something to eat for the traveler," and, turning to Mark, asked, "How many days haven't you eaten?"

"Two days. ...They did not feed us 'there'... And today I chewed some bark in the forest..."

"What's your name?"

"I was baptized as Mark..."

"A holy name... Well, Mark, sit down, get warm near the oven, and I will read the word of God to my son at parting... Everything is different now... Without a priest... In our parts you could not get to church even before... Fifty verst or so... And now even the church was closed, and the priest, well, who knows where they took him... We are Orthodox Christians... When one is born, or died, one needs to ask permission from God..."

The man sat down at his dead son's side and started reading prayers.

The woman lying in the dark corner got up, approached Mark and, having bowed, asked, "A runaway?"

"A runaway, hostess," he answered without fear, without any embarrassment.

"It is Saturday today, the bath is heated, go clean yourself," she said and led him with an oil-lamp into the cabin's extension which was still full of steam.

"Wait, I'll bring you some clean clothes..."

The woman left, and Mark began to pull off his boots, which he could do only with great effort, from his swollen feet.

It was hot and steamy in the bath. The fugitive wanted to take off quickly the rags and wash with hot water his body, eaten by lice. It seemed to him that now he would get rid of the gripes that were squeezing his whole body, and he was waiting with a lot of anticipation for the woman.

"This is life," he thought remembering the dead man. "One man is eager to obtain

freedom, while another is going away from it... Well, it is not in our power to live longer than it is fated... It is God's will... Why do I need this dead man as a sign? To tell me I'll live? Or, maybe that I will go after him?... Only God knows... And it is easier to die when you are free... We all will meet there... Those, who have driven away on the train... Heh! Those people! No determination!.. This is why they are being expropriated!.. But every peasant is power... Can do anything..."

The woman entered. "We could fit two of you in these clothes... You got thin... And, say, what was your patronymic name?"

"Efimovich, hostess, and yours?"

"Haven't you heard how father called me Nyura? You can call me just that... The clothes don't fit you... You'll fatten up and it'll do.... Don't touch your clothes, don't bring them to the cabin. There's no soap, though... We clean ourselves with ash... See, over there, in the box..."

"Thank you, hostess."

"Father is the master of this household, I am Nyura to you..."

"And what's your patronymic?"

"Stepanovna... But don't call me this way... I am Nyura to you... Tell me if you need anything... You are weak, you might need help, so I'll tell father..."

"I am not a kid, I'll manage..."

The woman left, and Mark eagerly started to wash the dirt from his body.

He enjoyed hot water for a long time, until fatigue made him put on clean underwear and clothes. He left the bath feeling unsteady, and sat down near the oven. Stepanovna brought to him a wooden bowl with a little milk and pieces of dark bread on the bottom.

"Don't get angry, Efimovich, you need to start with little food not to overeat after being starved."

"Why would I get angry, I thank you for even a crumb of bread, and you are right to give me so little," and he rushed at the food voraciously.

The old man was sitting at the table and reading the Psalter in a low voice, glancing at the newcomer from time to time. When Mark finished eating, he shortly said to Nyura, "Let the hapless sleep on the oven-bench..."

"And what about you, father?" Nyura asked with astonishment.

"I will read the word of God at parting this night..."

"Could I replace you, maybe?" Nyura cautiously asked.

"Go to bed, too... We are going to bury him tomorrow..."

Stepanovna showed Mark to the oven-bench, and she lay down on the wide simple bed without undressing.

As soon as Mark's head touched the pillow, it was as if he had lost his consciousness, and deep sleep embraced him. He did not hear either the old man's mutter over his dead son, or Nyura's heavy sighs, who had not slept a wink the whole night. Only before the early morning, when the dawn was peeking through the small windows, he saw a dream. He sees his elder brother Kuzma, who is coming down from the highest mountain with his head bent down. His path lies through the dense forest. Kuzma jumps over stubby young trees, he rushes somewhere, runs across the meadow, stumbles. The meadow is so strange, it is dark, no single blade of grass, no single snowflake, and everything around is black—it is neither day, nor night, and nothing can



be seen, but Kuzma looks only down, as if into the ground, and says, "Dig here," and falls into a ditch.

As much as Mark tried to see his brother in the dream once again, he couldn't. This vision woke him up. He opened his eyes, and even seeing unfamiliar surroundings, remembered everything. He felt joyful that everything had happened so well, that he was saved, that he had found such kind people... But they suffered a great loss... The son died. Mark heard a woman's voice, "Dear Lord, may Kuzma's soul rest in peace..."

"Kuzma's?... Kuzma?..." he repeated and, after being quickly dressed, came down from the oven-bench.

The sun was already peeking into the small windows. The old man-host was not in the room. The woman was sitting by the table and reading prayers, following the lines with her finger in the old greasy book. She saw Mark, but continued to read, remaining still.

Mark came closer to the coffin. It seems to him something familiar in the dead man's face and he came even closer. The early morning dream mixed with what he was seeing now in reality. He saw... "Yes, this is his beard, his thick wide brows, the nose... But this is the son... No... this is impossible..." Mark could not believe his senses. He came even closer, and when he saw a deep scar on the chin covered by the beard, he cried out, "Kuzma! My brother!" and, bending over the coffin, burst out in sobbing.

The woman got up, approached him, put a comforting hand on his shoulder and quietly said, "Efimych, don't be sad, this is God's will—we will all go there... You see, I nursed him back to health... He was like kin to me... I am not crying... This is God's decision... We do not dare..."

At this moment the host came in. Seeing Mark crying, he approached him. The woman continued consoling the fugitive.

"The pitiful fellow recognized his brother... Kuzma... So he is grieving... He did not get to see him alive. And Kuzma, too, was a fugitive... He was saving his life here... He lived here like he was at God's bosom... He was happy with everything... But it was his time... What can one do... God took him..."

"God's will," the old man uttered, "Rejoice that the Lord led you here to my home... Look, now you have seen Kuzma... You will say good-bye to him on his last way... And it will be easier for him there... So what that the man died, Mark Efimych, no one can live forever... It will be our time some day... You cannot escape from death..."

Mark quietly backed away from the coffin. It was hard. One wound has not healed yet, and now... Kuzma in the coffin...

The old man brought in the coffin's lid and placed it against the wall.

"Say your good-byes," he said and went to the dead man first.

They stood in silence for a while, crossed themselves, kissed the dead man on the forehead. The host covered the coffin with the lid and nailed it. Together, all three of them carried the dead man outside, put the coffin on the long sledge and tied it with rope.

"Well, God speed," said the old man, and the tiny procession headed into the deep forest.

The "cemetery" was not far away, and soon they arrived at the place where Kuzma was to be buried. There was a grave already waiting. The freshly turned forest soil was mixed with the tree roots and the snow, white spots of the newly cut thick roots

could be seen deep in the grave. Nearby, could be seen another grave covered with snow.

Mark helped to untie the coffin and to lower it into the grave. The old man read the requiem and started to sing, "Ma-a-ay he repo-o-ose with all the sa-a-aints..."

Nyura echoed him, and Mark, too, entered awkwardly, "Je-e-esus Chri-i-ist..."

The burial song was pinching at his heart, but Mark held back the sobbing that was tightening his chest and was the first to pick up his shovel to drive away carrying the burden of his amassed feelings.

On their return trip the old man was saying, "Now, Mark, you will be my son... You will be called Makar... We called Kuzma by that name, too... You'll be Makar Zakharovich... 'Cause I am Zakhar... See, what's happening... What kind of life this is... I have said good-bye to one son... and a new one is at my doorsteps... Well, it looks like this is God's will..."

They returned home. The old Zakhar Grivoryevich stayed outside to work around the yard, and Mark and Nyura entered the house.

"Go to the oven-bench," the young woman told him. "You need to regain your strength..."

Mark got on the oven-bench because he really felt tired. Lying in the warmth, he was remembering his home village, "How our people lived their lives! Oh, how they lived! The unrestricted freedom, the full cup! And what households! Everything was ours, did not need to serve anyone, did not bow down to anyone... And what else did people need? Envy killed the whole way of life! Those who were smart—had thriving farms; those who did not have brains—did not have property... So, they coveted what others had! Muzik likes to work, from work he becomes rich... One should not covet his wealth. Nothing good would come out of it... If this is not yours, don't touch it... Now everything is turned upside down. The robber is now at the top. Those who have something, need to give everything they have to him. That's how they started to dispossess.... They started robbing the peasant... Kuzma... He was thrifty and industrious... And what a farm!.. He had plenty of everything... And he was robbed... He was deported as a thief... It's good that he was a bachelor... I had to bury our old mother... And now Kuzma himself..."

The old man entered. From his oven-bench Mark saw him as if for the first time. Zakhar Grigoryevich was tall and straight-backed. His dried out face was framed by the thick gray beard. The gray eyes were bright, and deep wrinkles cut through a wide forehead. He was well over sixty.

"What, Makar, are you resting?" the host asked, calling Mark by his given son's name.

"Stepanovna told me to," Mark said almost apologetically.

"The runaways are supposed to... You should not be touchy from Nyura's comments... She means no harm... She nursed one back to health now... This is how her heart is..."

"E-e-e-eh, Makarushka, there is enough work for all of us," the woman said, also calling him by the name of the man's dead son. "This is a forest, and one needs to live here... What would you, a runaway, do?... There is nowhere for you to go anyway, and you are unfit for work now... How much do you wish to live?! You'll stay with us, gain some weight, God willing, then you will order us around..."

"Right, Nyura. You need to think about yourself now, Makar. Don't look at us. Lie

and rest. Spring is a long way off. Then we'll see..."

"What's from lying, Zakhar?..."

"I told you, I am a father to you. Don't you forget this. People come see us. Now you are my son..."

"Yes, that's true, but it's..."

"What 'but it's'?! What were you running away from? Want to be saved? So God sent us to save you, and you need to come to terms with it... So it was with Kuzma, your brother... Found us a year before... He dealt with it... Became a son to us... Did you see the grave in the forest?"

"I saw it..."

"My real son is buried there... Well, he left his father and his wife and passed away... Then we got Kuzma... He was also a runaway... But they were transported during the Lent... The frosts were especially strong, and the wind was always blowing after midnight... God only knows how he survived... Of course, he got to us exhausted, hungry... We took care of him, gave him shelter... And to avoid people's suspicions, we gave him my son's documents, and Kuzma became Makar Zakharovich Nefyedov, a forest watchman..."

Zakhar Grigoryevich sat closer to Mark.

"We nursed Kuzma back... At first he was in a very, very bad shape, but he pulled through... It was Nyura who nurtured him... She looked after him as if he were a kid... When spring came, and Kuzma got up and went, and went, and went, and he liked everything, the freedom, and he even wanted to work again... He said his hands were itching to start working... You know, a peasant cannot live without work... So he began helping around a little... And what kind of farm do we have? A cow and a horse... And Kuzma gradually got stronger... But he caught a cold last Holy Thursday. He was seized with illness immediately. Lay down and never got up again... He remembered you, 'Heh,' he would say, 'poor Mark. He is not going to leave his land, and he is not going to join the kolkhoz either... He won't escape Siberia!' He felt sorry for you, oh, how he felt sorry. But he was afraid to write you..."

The old man then changed the topic.

"And I recognized you at once. As soon as you got to our doorsteps, I looked at you and thought, 'That you were Kuzma's brother.' I was just waiting for you to tell your name, and when you called yourself Mark, then I was completely sure. Well, now your job is a small one. Gain your strength, spring is far away, and there is only work for one of us during winter... We don't have any other business... Make a round at the backyard, and that's it... This is our farm..."

Dreary winter days and long nights were crawling along. Mark was getting complete rest in bed. Zakhar Grigoryevich worked on the farm and was reading the Holy Scripture aloud, and on holidays he organized a mass, and they were singing prayers together. Nyura looked after the house and cooked simple food, and she looked after Mark as if he were her own son.

"Life is odd," Mark thought, "these people are complete strangers, and they are like my close family members. Who am I to them? And see how they cherish me, as if I were made of gold!"

Remembering his native land, he imagined his village and the feeling of fear took over him—some were taken away by hunger; others, like he himself, were deported, and

the streets and houses became empty. "Why they torture people this way? And for what?" he thought, and could not find an answer.

Once, when the old man went to the village, Mark, waiting until the sun finally appeared from behind the mountain and started to warm up the earth covered with snow, stepped out to take a breath of the fresh freezing air. It was not his first outing. He already knew the places close to the house. And aimless walking was already beyond his power to accept. He wanted to work, to do something, to apply his growing strength.

"Everyone works," he thought, "and who am I? A chairman?" and he entered the horse stable to clean up while his host was not home. But he did not do even a half of what was needed to be done, when he heard a gentle woman's voice behind his back, "What are you doing, Makarushka? Is this your job? Don't we have a man in this house?"

Mark stopped, stuck the pitchfork in the pile of manure, without letting it go off his hands. "I wanted to try, Stepanovna... Got bored..." he said shyly.

Nyura approached the manure pile, gently unclenched the fingers squeezing the pitchfork, and said, "I need to keep an eye on you as if you were a kid... Want to go out? Go for a walk, but don't take up the pitchfork... There will be enough work during spring..."

"What are the hands for? What is one to do with them?"

"Your hands will need to regain strength," and the woman took Mark by the hand, "Go away from here, go!.. And you say, your 'hands,' and why your hand is shaking? There's no strength in it! And you are taking up a pitchfork!"

"It's because of too much idle time, Stepanovna..."

"Well, go while it is still warm," and she lightly pushed him in the shoulder, sending him away from the stables. When they found themselves out in the yard, she, nodding to the sun, said, "Look, see how bright it is... The sun is smiling at you, and you sneaked into the stables; now get away from the yard, and when you return – get on the oven-bench. Why would you want to think about work! You'll have enough time..." and she lightly pushed him again in the shoulder and, laughing, dashed into the house.

Stepanovna was a wholesome Russian woman, who grew up in Urals forests. She loved the wild nature of her land, and the quiet, peaceful life in the remote forest cabin. She would never exchange her small house with its sleepy existence for the noise of not only a large city, but also of a small village, in which the district center was located. She would never agree to leave the native mountains and forests to move into the steppe plains. Here, everything was dear, familiar and precious to her.

She loved people, even though she was far away from them. She wanted to see in them her kindred, good people, as if they were her brothers and sisters. Her naïve impression painted the picture of the life on earth like in heaven, even though she already knew about evil people from Kuzma and Mark. In this mysterious understanding of life, in this simplicity of perception of her surroundings she was afraid of only one thing—not to be like Eve, not to take a sin on her soul, even though she understood that only God was sinless. This outlook of the world placed her in the position of an older sister to Mark, and sometimes it transformed into a mother-son relationship.

Mark, being under a strong emotional impact of all that he had lived through, having experienced the greatest sorrow, having gone through hardships and lost his trust in people, wandered in his past that was dear to him like the golden childhood, and

he unexpectedly found immeasurable kindness here, in this small cabin. Yes, in this tiny house covered with snow, amid unfamiliar trees, amid the highest mountains and deep valleys, lived genuine people with loving hearts and Christian souls, whose life calling was to do only good. Their every word, every move, every glance, breath, and heartbeat were aimed only at doing the good deeds. Mark marveled at them and thanked God that He directed his feet to this forest cabin.

Eventless days were passing by. The Lent was coming to an end. The days were becoming longer and warmer, but the snow continued to hold tight, even though it was getting tarnished and a coarse icy crust had formed on its surface.

For the holidays Nyura cleaned the cabin, baked an Easter loaf, and dyed eggs with a concoction of some forest herbs. Zakhar Grigoryevich looked after the burning oil-lamp hanging in front of the old icon darkened from time, occasionally adding oil to it. Mark, not wanting to get in the way of anyone in the cabin, was wandering the forest with his thoughts about the family he had left in the village, his wife and kids. The thoughts were heavy and dark as night—are they alive or have they died of hunger?

The spring was creeping unnoticed, and the sun that warmed the earth stronger every day reminded about its advance. The night before Easter approached. They spent it in prayers, they were reading the New Testament and singing the spiritual songs; towards morning in the small cabin was heard the joyous and infusing with hope “Christ is Risen!”

Suddenly, the Easter Day reminded the runaway of his native land, where the fresh greenery was exuberantly bursting from the black soil, where the trees were already in bloom diffusing their aroma, the birds flittered and soared, the first butterflies fluttered... But here...

Here the snow stayed until mid-May, and then melted down quickly, turned dark, and scanty clearings appeared on the sunny side. Only late showers helped to wash it away almost completely, but leaving traces in the deep forest and in deep hollows. June started to grow with fresh grass, flecked with the first spring flowers; thick green leaves and white flowers appeared on the branches of trees; spruce and pine lent to the air their freshness mixed with the perfume of the blossoming trees; the sun rose higher and higher; the birds chattered and sang, their voices never ceasing from early morning till late evening; small insects started to move around, animals came to life, and a man could not resist the awakening Nature. He felt its stirrings, and in his soul the revitalizing “Christ is Risen” sounded; his creative spirit was restless with his desire to work, and he was leaving the stuffy cabin to drop a dormant seed into the rested soil after asking for a blessing from God...

“Well, Makar, now let’s get to work,” – Zakhar Grigoryevich said finally. “We’ll start tomorrow... It is time to sow...”

Nyura, smiling, looked at Mark. She was content. Her care for him showed in his appearance. And he himself felt that he was once again the same as he had been in his village—healthy, strong, and full of energy; and his desire to work was so great that the words of Zakhar Grigoryevich exited all of this thoughts, and he could not fall asleep for a long time.

Behind the cabin there was a piece of land won over from the forest. It was a small piece of land, with the soil that was not like the soil that he had worked his entire life. A small wooden plow instead of a metal one, the seeds in a basket instead of the

seeder, and the timing—it is July, the time when in his native lands the wheat is already standing thick as a wall, wide as a sea, and the wind runs a wave... “Ah, my land!” remembers Mark, and feels its heady smell, sees the black earth, the lumps of which crumble in the peasant’s hand. Mark would put his ear to the ground, but does not hear the land’s breathing here...

“Heh! The land! Steppe! Run an eye over—there is space, freedom, look over the very end and cannot see where the sky merges with the earth; the sky, as a blue dome, towers over the head; the sun... What a great sun! It warms and heats up, even if the land would not want to, but it has to give the crop!..”

Mark looked around—there is a mountain on the left, on the right—another one, even higher, in front—the forest without an end, behind him—a deep valley, and behind it—another mountain covered with forest, and there is nothing to look at, nowhere to rest his eyes... The sun rises late, sets early, the clouds cling to the earth itself, and the sky merges with earth in an uncertain line, and it looks like the end of the earth is right here, under the very nose... The mountains depress, the forest advances with the wall... “Oh! There is no space, no freedom... Where would the grain be born?...”

And again he would see his native steppe... The grain sways... The wheat, like gold... Through the thick stalks he sees the black soil, a rich one, and on the top the heavy wheat-ear bends... “Oh, you, mother-land, my native land, our peasant mother-keeper!” And Mark remembered that his land was taken over by the hateful collective farm—kolkhoz, the peasants were thrown out of their own homes and deported to the Siberia like thieves... “No, this cannot be happening... My land!... I will not leave my own land! They can kill me, I can die, but at least I will die on my land!”

“Had such a vast field! Could not go around, could not see everything at once...” And Mark tossed about, and a groan of deep pain broke away from his breast, “Land!”

He looked at a thin strip of his host’s field and thought that this whole piece of land could fit into a bag. And this land is littered with small rocks, with tree roots! There is nothing to do here! A woman without any helpers would do just fine both in the house and this field!.. Is there anything to do here for a man, who worked on the dozens of acres?

Mark got bored, he longed for the breath of the black earth land. His heart filled with sadness. Here are the people dear to his heart, there—the exuberant grain swings, entices; here is salvation, quiet life, there—turmoil, and every day is full with danger...

He would leave the house, sadness eats him alive—nothing is the same; everything is foreign, even though it saved his life. He looks at the earth—and he is dreaming chernozem, the black soil, looks at the forest... No, no... The mountains depress and the forest advances... As if the mountains would interlock, squeeze the forests and entomb everything under the trunks of the centenarian trees—him, Zakhar Grigoryevich and Nyura, together with their small forest cabin...

Mark was feeling as if intoxicated, and a terrible but a brave decision was coming.

“I’ll leave!” he finally said to himself, and immediately felt better.

But making the decision was only half the battle. How to part with those who saved him, who took him in, adopted him, who, maybe, cherish secret hopes... No, no, it is better not to think... But how to tell?... Instead of the words of gratitude, instead of the words of acknowledgment, come back the short and harsh “I’ll leave...” Mark imagined all the complexity of the things ahead, delayed his departure, thinking how to explain his

decision to the people to whom he had become close and dear.

The change in him was great, and of course, it did not go unnoticed. The old man and Nyura silently observed him. "He got homesick," Zakhar Grigoryevich thought. Nyura anxiously observed Mark. Deep down in her heart a foreboding was born. She got quiet, hid, waiting until he would say what preyed on his heart.

The field work that distracted Mark a little from his thoughts ended soon. He felt again the forest closing in on him, the mountains pressing him, the sky seemed to him a patch of the host's forest field, there was not enough air to breathe, he could not sleep at night—having a flat field with immense open space... "I'll leave! I cannot, I'll die here like Kuzma!..." and his family...

He never spoke to Zakhar Grigoryevich or Nyura about his family. At first there was no fitting occasion, and then when he noticed Nyura's very kind attitude towards him, he did not want to aggrrieve her loving heart. He would go to the forest and think the same painful thoughts about his wife, children, and the wide, open steppe, about the bright sun, and the dark starry nights, and everything seemed dear to him, better than here. But some thoughts assaulted him—he should not return because he would be caught and imprisoned again, and anyway he won't see his wife or his kids. "Where are they?.. Are they alive?.. Have they turned into beggars?..."—He knows that they did not stay in their village. They were thrown out of their own home. It is good that it was during the fall. They left, and maybe found somewhere a shelter before winter?...

Here, only now, are the first early sprouts of rye. Mark looked at the slender sharp needles breaking through the earth, and his heart rebelled. He returned to the cabin.

"I cannot, Zakhar Grigoryevich, I don't enjoy my life here, even though I feel your kindness in everything..."

"Are you homesick, Makar?" asked the old man, who had been waiting for him to express the words of sadness for quite some time.

"I am..."

"What are you going to do?"

Mark was silent. Nyura, busying around the oven, stopped. "He'll leave!" she thought. She ached for this strange man, whom she got used to over the long winter. She felt badly for him because she knew that he could get into the hands of the mean people again and be thrown into a dirty and cold train-car, and then he would not be able to escape death.

"Well, Makar, nightingales will not sing in a golden cage and she always wants to be free... We would not keep you by force. Do you want to leave?"

"I'm going to leave," said Mark flatly. "I cannot, Zakhar Grigoryevich... Forgive me..."

"What for to forgive you? You are your own master... You can better see what is better..."

"Well, you gave me shelter, took care of me, called me your son, and I..."

"Everything is in the hands of God, Makar. We are Christians... As the New Testament says, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' And there is no sin in your decision to leave. Everyone is drawn to his native land... But maybe, you have a family?..."

"Yes, Zakhar Grigoryevich, I've got wife and kids..."

"Where are they?"

"Out there, in the world... I've heard they left the village... God knows where I should look for them... With God's help..."

"This poor man," Nyura thought, "probably this is why he avoided me... What a man... A just man... It looks like God himself shows him the way." And a double-edged feeling overwhelmed her—she was sorry to part with the man, whom she came to love not only with her motherly love, but at the same time she was glad that he remained faithful to his wife, his family, and now, strong and healthy, he decided to leave to find his loved ones. Her heart even became light when his long silence, and his depressive sorrow, ended.

"It is up to you, Makar, we cannot force you to remain."

"I am guilty before you..."

"Guilty of what? You did not offend us in any way, we haven't heard a harsh word from you."

"Maybe Stepanovna is offended?..."

"There is nothing to be offended by, Mark Efimovich, I haven't seen any evil coming from you..."

"You have done so much for me..."

"God ordered us to take care of an orphan, there is nothing even to think about..."

"We, Makar, are not forcing you. God shows a way to any man," Zakhar Grigoryevich said. "We gave you shelter, and we will prepare you for the road. When would you like to leave?"

"If it is up to me, I will leave as early as tomorrow, Zakhar Grigoryevich..."

"Well, God speed!..."

Mark was set at ease. He looked straight in his saviors' eyes and there he wanted to read their opinion about him. But it was impossible. Both the old man and Nyura hid the burden of the future goodbye deep inside.

This last night no one could sleep. In the darkness everyone lay quietly with his thoughts and deeply sighed. Mark was thinking about the native steppe, his family, and it seemed to him that he was once again in his own house, surrounded by his children and wife.

Zakhar Grigoryevich was thinking that he was about to lose a son, and he wanted to help Mark and he was deciding as to how to better equip him for the road ahead.

Nyura remembered all the days after the runaway had entered their cabin, and now it became clear to her why Mark had been always so distant from her.

In the early morning Mark got up and went out of the cabin. The sun was up, but the mountain hid it from the view. He looked around, and it was as if the mountains parted making a way for him, to make it easier to walk, and the forest became more familiar, it would hide the runaway. He came back. He could not wait. And there is nothing to pack. Everything he has on was not his. Nothing is left of his possessions...

After the breakfast the old man looked into the little window and asked, "So, Makar, have you changed your mind?"

"No, Zakhar Grigoryevich..."

"Well then, it is time... Sit down right here, by the icons... Here are Makar's documents... Take them with you... They'll come handy... Here are two hundred rubles for the road... The road, suppose, is a very long... Come back if something goes wrong... We will always welcome you... Write to us when you find your family... Here is a small pack that Nyura prepared for you for the road..."

"Zakhar Grigoryevich! Nyura! Stepanovna!..." Mark threw himself at their feet, but



the old man stopped him.

"Makar, kneel only before God... Nyura, come here, we need to sit down for a while for good luck before the trip..."

Stepanovna came closer. Her face was serious and calm. She sat on the bench and looked at Mark with her bright eyes.

After sitting down silently for a minute, the old man got up, crossed himself, and Mark and Nyura followed.

"Well, it is time for the road," Zakhar Grigoryevich said and everyone went out of the cabin. Mark started to thank again his host and Nyura, but the old man stopped him sharply, "Thank God, Makar, not us..."

"Well, goodbye," Mark said in a dismal voice, and he felt sad to part with the people, who saved him from death.

"Farewell, Makar," the old man replied sternly.

"So long," he heard a tender voice of the woman.

Mark turned around and half-running rushed into the forest so he could get to the railroad before night.

Zakhar Grigoryevich and Nyura stood on the doorsteps for a long time, until the broad-shouldered figure of Mark disappeared in the bright greenery of the forest. Orbs of tears glistened in their eyes...

Mark, energetically walking along the forest, said over and over to himself, "I will not surrender!..."

# I Believe

Communists implement the Marxist dogma  
to eradicate belief in God,  
they close churches, kill and send clergymen to the  
concentration camps  
and conduct relentless anti-religious propaganda.

*Dedicated to millions  
who remained unshaken in their faith  
and to thousands of martyred clergy  
who endured sufferings and death  
rather than abandon their service to God and their flock.*

## Meditation Before Easter

The furious Sea is throwing malicious waves onto the bathed-with-blood Earth as it tries to wash away the filth of horror and shame of terrible crimes of the two-legged creature—man... It does not murmur, but roars, seethes, growls; with brute savagery its white-flecked foaming crests, lifted by its incalculable strength, collapse menacingly upon the shore-side rocks, spattering into billions of bitter drops, losing their strength and disappearing under a gradually whitening line of water...

The Earth is lurking. Like a mischievous guilty dog it stretches itself out groveling before the endless rumbling foam; it is silent, although it knows the Sea is strong; that it could cause many a misfortune, but it knows that it has no power to wash away the Lord of Malevolence, which had set in here, on the Solid ground, as boundless as the ebullient expanse of water...

The bright Sun has covered with an old dirty veil... It doesn't want to see the sinful Earth... And the sorrowful Sky became gloomy... It collected the tears of the suffering orphans, the widows, the old men and scatters its grief around in large drops of rain...

The Wind whirls in a wild dance... delivering everywhere a song of horror... The Earth moans in mortal terror...

But a Great Day shall burst out, whereby the Sun with fiery heat would tear and scatter the curtain of rain; would tame the maddened waves, quiet the wind; warm the hapless sufferers with a springtime caress—then the malevolent god would burn in the Sun's blazing rays...

The Great Day of the Resurrection of Christ would burst out!

## I Believe

The great park sloped down to a wide lake, the deep waters of which lazily lapped against the sloping shore. The old linden trees, slender chestnuts, weeping willows, blue spruces and branching pine trees were intertwined with lilac bushes and jasmines. The green grass clearings sparkled with freshness in the sun. Only the forgotten fountains no longer spilled their dewy tears.

The avenues were still tended by the former owner's gardener, and in front of the main building, there were flowerbeds. Dead branches were cut off and the shrubs were pruned by a careful hand. The tennis and croquet lawns were still kept in order, but a new spirit of destruction could be felt in the quietness amongst the silent trees; and here and there the bright wounds of mutilated branches, and the broken noses of the beautiful statues of the fountains bore witness to its power to destroy. The old gardener sometimes caught the hooligans, but he nearly lost his job through doing so, and with it his rations which he needed to keep alive.

Spring with all its strength, with all its beauty greeted the great day of Christ's Resurrection. The last week of Lent had already begun, and the old park looked beautiful with its yellow sandy paths, the straight lines of bushes, the groupings of the ornamental trees, and the flowerbeds with the first spring flowers.

The two large two-storied houses in the park had belonged not long ago to the director of a large metallurgical works. But now they are filled with dozens of homeless children... The houses were re-planned, and the plundered furniture was divided amongst the staff. Most of the rooms were converted to new uses, one was turned into a dormitory, another one into a classroom, and in the others the teachers lived. There was, of course, a general dining room, a club room, library and theatre.

This was still a time of transition, and the old ways were still mixed with the new, but the communist comrade Angelis, the Headmistress of the provincial homeless children's home, carried out the policy of the communist party consistently and firmly in matters concerning the bringing up of the younger generation. Sometimes she made concessions to her staff by carrying out herself the task of influencing the children's minds with the communist doctrines.

Everyone in the district children's home was also getting ready for Easter, but in his own way. All the teachers went secretly to confession in town to Father Mitrofan, and some pupils contrived to go with them. In their homes outside the walls of the orphanage, everyone was preparing to meet the holiday as they did in the old pre-revolutionary years.

The Headmistress, Agnesa Fedorovna Angelis, worked hard preparing for the approaching holiday in the children's home. But she felt alone. She was convinced of this when it became necessary to appoint someone to give an anti-religious lecture.

First a young teacher Polozov was called into her office.

"Vladimir Ivanovich, you are assigned to give an anti-religious lecture," Agnesa Fedorovna informed him.

Polozov was startled from surprise, but he answered boldly:

"I could give a lecture on religion, I always had a Five in scriptures, but as far as I am concerned, anti-religious lectures are not in my line, although I am a naturalist."

"I was counting on you, after all you are a young teacher..."

"You miscalculated, Agnesa Fedorovna. I know natural sciences, I know physics, chemistry, mathematics, I have studied all this, but I have not studied anti-religious science, and I cannot undertake what I know nothing about."

The headmistress decided not to ask if he were a believer or not, but she thought: "rotten intelligentsia!"

The young women teachers were called in turn and came out of the office with red faces. The only one the headmistress did not call was the elderly teacher Sevastian Grigoryevich Vorzakovsky, as she decided, that "grandpa," as she called him in her mind, would certainly refuse.

Sevastian Grigoryevich had already retired before the beginning of the war on a pension and lived in his own tiny little house. His pension was enough for him to live on, but his grownup sons whom did not forget their father and sent him their earned five rubles, so that the old man could live more comfortably. He chided them for this, but he accepted the five rubles and deposited it in the bank, where his small capital was saved, with the idea that after his death the inheritance would come either to them or his grandchildren.

The sudden revolution not only took away his savings earned by many years of hard labor, but also the small pension, which was his reward for his long and honorable service. And his sons were no longer in the condition to send him their five ruble notes, because now they didn't have them, and they themselves could scarcely make ends meet. The old man stood firm for a long time. The flowers, which he cultivated in his tiny garden, were not needed by the hungry people, the berries and fruit didn't bring much profit. And money itself had no value. Having consulted with his wife, he decided to go out to work. So he wound up in the district children's home and lived in one room with young Polozov.

When the working day finished, and Polozov finally met Sevastian Grigoryevich in their room, he confided to him his conversation with Agnesa Fedorovna.

"The headmistress called me into her office, a lecture on an anti-religious theme, she says, is needed to be given..."

"And what did you say?" asked Vorzakovsky anxiously.

"I said I could do a lecture on a religious theme, but I was not familiar with this anti-religious teaching."

The old teacher nearly ran to the young man and firmly shook his hand:

"Did you really say that?"

"Yes."

"Well done, Vladimir Ivanovich, really, well done...But they may dismiss you..."

"Then she called on our girls..."

"Well, they, my dear friend, will not do this devilish task, God forbid! And she did not dare to call me in..."

"I'll tell you frankly, Sevastian Grigoryevich, our head mistress is still a soft hearted woman, another would have liquidated such counterrevolutionaries like us from the face of the earth long ago."

"My dear friend, Vladimir Ivanovich, teachers are not to be had, that is her difficulty. Don't imagine that she isn't grinding her teeth with rage. Look, if she does not get support from us, she will see to it herself that the communist line in educational work is followed. Here, you play the piano, teach children's singing, your little songs have nothing to do with the communist party, but you listen, what's ringing out downstairs now? Ah? Do you hear it? You cannot distinguish the words, but the melody is hellish. And the good seeds that you and I sow are buried by the weeds of the communist words, among which, oh, God, how many will be poisonous ones!"

On the eve of the Easter day, after work, the headmistress summoned all the teachers and staff and announced that even those who had a free day were to remain in the children's home. She informed them about tomorrow's anti-religious program, and warned them that attendance of the mid-night religious service will be reported to the Town Department of People's Education.

"Tomorrow will be a normal working day," she said in conclusion.

The warning, of course, was not needed. All except the staff on night duty were at the secret Easter religious service. Later, Agnesa Fedorovna, having not found the head administrator of the Town Department of People's Education, reported this to the inspector, a former teacher, who was non-party member, but an independent.

"Well, what did you expect, comrade Angelis? It is not possible to kill Faith by means of decree. And, moreover, I do not advise you to complain to the administrator, you will only get the blame for not having known how to spread the anti-religious propaganda in the proper way among the teachers," said the inspector in answer to her indignation. Agnesa Fedorovna swallowed the pill and returned home without having got any satisfaction. But this all happened after the holidays.

On the first day of Easter after breakfast all the teachers and educators with their classes filled the large theater room of the children's home. On the small stage there was a table covered with a red cloth, on the back wall of the stage hung a portrait of Lenin. On the walls of the theater were anti-religious posters, drawn by the hand of the headmistress herself. The honorary presidiums were unanimously elected, consisting of Lenin, Zinovyev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and Trotsky, mysterious people, fantastical, as fairy-tale individuals for the children. After that, the worker's presidium was chosen, to which the students of the higher classes were elected. The chairman of the grand assembly turned out to be Lyenya Kozyrev, a boy of about fourteen, with the makings of a good organizer.

The election went in an "well organized manner." Agnesa Fedorovna had written lists of both presidiums beforehand and distributed them to the most active students. As soon as the chairman of the pupils committee opened the meeting, hands went up immediately to propose the candidates for presidiums.

Finally, the chairman of the assembly announced:

"The floor for the lecture about the origin of Easter is granted to comrade Angelis."

Agnesa Fedorovna gave a cunningly contrived history of the rites of spring amongst savage people, ridiculed the clergy, talked about the backwardness of the population, which was "deliberately kept in the dark under the Tsar's rule," and about her own orthodox communism. The lecture was unconvincing and uninteresting, and moreover, the listener could not find in it a single word, which was able to disprove

Christ and His Resurrection, but the sarcasm of the lecturer caused only a feeling of disgust against herself. The teachers lost that visible respect they showed to her before the lecture.

Did the children understand any of it? They only grasped the idea that the “priests must be beaten,” and by no means all of them even that much.

Sevastian Grigoryevich sat with his class in the first row. Resting his hands on his walking stick, the constant companion of his long journeys, and leaning his chin on his hands, he sat with his eyes closed, silent and motionless. It even seemed that his ears were closed to the lies that were poured out with impunity from the stage into the children’s souls. Not far from him sat Grisha Khlopov, a boy of about twelve. His broad open face was covered in freckles, his ginger hair stuck out on all sides, and his large, smart gray eyes, as always, sought the truth. The whole time Grisha watched his old teacher, and as soon as the lecture was finished, he was the first to highly raise his hand. The chairman of the assembly immediately granted him permission to ask his question.

“Well I want to ask Sevastian Grigoryevich, does he believes in God.” The old teacher did not move, but in the intense silence of the crowded hall his clear voice rang out:

“I believe in Good Lord, and in the true Christ, Son of God...”

“Khlopov!” shouted the enraged lecturer, “Such questions to the teachers are not in order, it is not your business, you can ask questions about the lecture!”...

But there were no further questions. And there could not be any. Sevastian Grigoryevich had reduced the stupid chatter of the headmistress to nothing and strengthened the influence of good seed in the innocent children’s souls...

The assembly came to an end. Everyone dispersed to their rooms. Polozov waited impatiently for Vorzakovsky. Finally, the old teacher came.

“Well, you are a fine fellow Sevastian Grigoryevich,” the young teacher greeted him with enthusiasm, “the only problem is, this won’t pass so simply for us...”

“Well, what does it matter? I’m old man, it’s all the same for me, but, it might be bad for you...” There was a knock on the door.

“Come in!” shouted Polozov.

Grisha appeared in the doorway.

“May I come in?” He asked boldly.

“Of course, why not? Come in, Grisha...”

“I came to say to you: “Christ is Risen!”

“Truly He is Risen, Grisha,” answered the teachers, and embracing the boy, they each kissed him in turn. His freckled face was beaming, and the joy of the Holy Day shone in his clear eyes...



## Easter in the Catacombs

The fictitious names of the characters and places of action need not be secret for the reader of the free world. However, it is an iron-clad necessity of our times—we have to conceal from the communist agents all that concerns our fellow countrymen living now under the rule of the red devil. From them and from their agents here abroad we conceal the names of the real Russians,<sup>1</sup> about whom we are writing here.

In the spring of 1929 I received a letter from my sister, Vera, in which she wrote: “The Father is very sick. He has tuberculosis in such a stage when nothing could be done anymore to help him. He understands this very clearly and suffers terribly. Loneliness increases his sufferings. I cannot help him in many ways, but think that you could make his life brighter, more exactly, that remaining short period of life, which God allotted to him. Think about it, dear, how could you help your father and reply immediately...”

After my return from Crimea, all the time I avoided to come to my little native place, where everyone knew that I went as a volunteer in the White Army. And now, in the numerous autobiographies, which one had to write every time one applied for employment, I never mentioned about my military service. My sister’s letter, however, forced me to disregard this precaution and I replied immediately that after the end of the school year where I was teaching, I will come home to support my father and would attempt to find employment in some school in our railroad hamlet or somewhere nearby.

So, I have done that. As soon as the summer vacations started, I went home. I found my father in a very bad state. True, he was standing firm, didn’t want to show that he was terminally ill, but his appearance was terrible.

After a few days of rest, I went to the local office of Narobras,<sup>2</sup> where I found my old acquaintances, schoolmates, and simply nice people, who right away helped me find a position as a teacher of geography in the local Seven-Year Trade School. The school was located in the former gymnasium and its principal was a former headmistress of the Women’s gymnasium in Taganrog, Mar’ya Petrovna, who for lack of qualified persons from the proletarian class was appointed to that position.

I left my family in the coal mine hamlet of Snyezhnoye and moved to Nikitovka. Before the schools started in September, I dedicated all time to my father. In good weather we made short strolls on the path edged by the lilac bushes that divided the row of apartment houses from the rail tracks.

In the afternoons I usually read the newspapers and books to my father because he didn’t have the strength to read for long periods of time. Sometimes I played for him his preferred pieces of music on his old harmonium.<sup>3</sup> My younger brother Igor made him a crystal receiver in his radio class, and I would find the concert transmissions of classical music from the radio stations abroad and then pass the earphones to my father, who was lying in bed. My father, who knew, but most of all passionately loved music. He could lie in bed for hours listening. During that time his face reflected calmness and tender emotion.

With the beginning of the school year I could not devote so much time to my father. The school hours and endless meetings were taking most of my time. In addition, since I already knew Ukrainian, the director of the school sent me to attend evening courses called "Ukrainization for the Teachers." My father understood and resigned himself to my long absences during the days and nights, because he knew that I was not too far away. Even when the meetings ended past midnight, sometimes as late as one or two o'clock in the morning, he knew that when I returned home he would hear my voice asking him, "Well, Papa, how did you feel today? Are you tired?" Or I would ask, "Are you resting, Papa? Can I do something for you?" Knowing that I was close by had a calming effect on him and only this was making me feel happy to be there. He told me that he was not worrying anymore that Vera would remain alone when he died and he knew that I would take care of his funeral.

Late in the autumn we noticed that every day he was losing his strength and we stopped our strolls on Sundays. Now he was mostly staying in bed and eating very little. His doctor told us that our father might probably last until February or at the latest until March. Now all my free time was spent sitting near his bed. I observed him closely and became convinced that the doctor's estimate was right.

In January 1929 the political campaign started for the elections to be held, it seems, sometime late that spring. These were the elections for all levels of the Soviet government bodies, on the local, district, regional, and central levels. To have a right to vote, all residents were notified about an obligatory registration. I knew that for me this was a very dangerous time, but there was no other solution—I could not leave my sister alone with our dying father and, in order to stay, I had to register myself as a resident of Nikitovka. Shortly after the registration I received a notice from the authorities stating that as a known former *byelogvardyets*,<sup>4</sup> I was deprived of civil and voting rights. Vera and I decided not to tell our dying father and let him be without worries in the last days of his life.

In the beginning I was almost happy about my new status—I was relieved of "the right to be elected" and "the right to vote." From the point of view of an enemy of the Soviet regime, it looked to me to be an almost excellent solution. Now I didn't have to take part directly or indirectly in the election campaigns, didn't have to raise my hand in the disgusting "voluntary" procedure of being forced to approve the Bolshevik Party lists of candidates. And I felt almost like a normal and morally healthy individual who didn't have the need anymore to pretend all the time that I supported the Soviet regime. It was as if some heavy burden fell off my shoulders. I suddenly felt free.

But my happiness was short-lived. The next day I began to see clearly the consequences of being a *lishenyets*.<sup>5</sup> In the morning, as soon as I came to school, the young office clerk came to me and whispered a message in my ear, "Would you please go to see Mar'ya Petrovna. She has an urgent matter to discuss with you." Being summoned put me on the alert and I knocked very carefully at the door of the school director.

Mar'ya Petrovna, the former headmistress of the Gymnasium, was now a director of the Seven-Year Trade School. The times had changed. She knew that her position was on shaky ground. As soon as some party member with reasonable qualifications appeared, her old intelligentsia background would become a cause for her dismissal. Therefore, she learned to maneuver between the opposite forces of good and evil and

find the path to survival in those unsettled times.

Her manner of talking with subordinates depended on the person she was dealing with. Some she greeted with a quiet smile and friendly conversation; others with apparent calmness and a lot of restraint; and with some, she was very strict, though she tried not to be bossy. In the last case, she sat directly in front of the person and always kept her head with the graying hair bent to one side, as if she was deflecting it from a blow that could hit her at any moment. She did foresee, had a presentiment of this and, in the nineteen hundred thirties, a "hand of the proletarian justice," indeed, did not allow her mercy: Mar'ya Petrovna made the forced trip to the Middle Asia, lived there in exile more than five years and returned as a heroine in the native hamlet right before the arrival there of the Germans. But her nest was completely demolished...

I knocked carefully the second time. "Enter!" sounded her ringing voice from the office. I opened the door and slowly entered the room.

Mar'ya Petrovna was sitting behind her large desk. Over her head hung Lenin's<sup>6</sup> portrait. As I glanced at his sly physiognomy, at that moment, for some unknown reason, it appeared to me that on the forehead of this leader of a world revolution barely visible little horns were beginning to shoot, and I thought, "devil!" as I was taking seat offered to me by the director of the Seven-year Trade School.

"Good morning, Mar'ya Petrovna," I said.

"Good morning, good morning," she saluted me without hiding the annoyance in her voice, and started to talk to me showing her nervousness openly, "Sit down, please, Orest Mikhailovich. I don't know where to start... There is trouble... What I am going to do with you? How I am going to tell you this?"

I understood that this was the beginning of the reprisals that I had anticipated, and calmly asked her, "Probably, this is in regard to me being deprived of civil rights?"

"Yes, yes, my dear... Yes, yes... You should know... I am now a very small person... Nobody is taking my opinion into consideration... I can't do anything to help you... It is even difficult to suggest anything... You know yourself, the times have changed... I can only express my sympathy. But how would my sympathy help you?!"

In a calm voice I asked her, "Tell me, Mar'ya Petrovna, but straight forward, what did really happen?"

"Well, you see," she was encouraged by my calm and direct question, "they called me from the Narobras early this morning and told me that I should not allow you to continue to teach in school because you are a lishenyets. This is terrible, really terrible! You, my dear, will be remaining without work, but we are losing an excellent teacher. These are terrible times. I am afraid for you. It will be very hard for you to find another position. But you may try anyway in Narobras to see Sergey Sergeyevich; he is a very warm-hearted person, and he is a non-party man. He might tell you what to do. Go immediately there, do not delay." And she added emphatically, like trying to encourage me to act, "You know the proverb 'Strike while the iron is hot!'"

I could not explain why, but I listened very calmly to all the "excuses" of poor Mar'ya Petrovna, who continued, "Forgive me for having to tell you such unpleasant news. But the times now are like this, one doesn't know today what to expect for oneself. You understand what I mean?"

Her litany began to annoy me, and I didn't want to look in her face, but lifted my eyes up, above her head, and fixed them on the portrait of the one who was responsible

for my troubles. "Yes", I thought, "He is the 'one', the devil himself!" And with this idea in my mind I pointed my finger to the portrait of Lenin and asked her suddenly, "Why have you hung over your head a portrait of that devil? Do you think that he will bring you happiness? Malevolent spirits have never brought anything good to anybody!"

"What do you mean 'devil'? What are you saying?" she began to worry. "That's a portrait of Lenin!" And almost whispering, she asked me, "Please, for God's sake don't talk so loud."

But I became calmly sarcastic, "My dear Mar'ya Petrovna, try to look carefully on that diabolic image, look very, very carefully. Do you see what is growing there on his forehead? Those are real horns! Yes, real devil's horns!"

She looked at me with eyes wide open and exclaimed, "My God! What are you saying?! For God's sake, quickly get out of here! You better go!" Then she added in a more reconciliatory voice, "But don't forget to see Sergey Sergeyevich. I will call him that you are coming..."

Of course, I went to see Sergey Sergeyevich, but I didn't find anything that could console me from him. The old teacher, who was now one of the inspectors of Narobras, said to me with regret, "This order comes from Gopartcom. <sup>7</sup> It is not a matter for us to decide. But I wouldn't expect anything good following this order."

I returned home. My sister, who was used to my always coming home late, wondered, "Why are you home so early?"

I told her what happened, and we decided not to tell our father. He had been so pale and weak in the past few weeks that we had notified both Igor and Anya to be ready for his death. I told him I would stay home from now on to keep him company and to take care of him, and he accepted my explanation without any questions. In the few weeks after this incident, on February 18, 1929, my father died quietly but in full consciousness.

The funeral of my father kept me so busy that for a while I didn't have time to think about what had happened to me. But afterwards I began to figure out what lay ahead. Being deprived of civil rights at that time meant also to be deprived of right to work. To find employment here where everybody knew that I was the lishenyets was now impossible. I knew that for me there was no solution but to depart from here as soon as possible, cover up my tracks, conceal the information that the authorities here had deprived me of civil rights, and find work somewhere else.

In theory it was an excellent idea, but in practice it was not so simple. Before moving to another place one had to remove oneself from the register of military service and from the register of the teachers' professional union. In both cases I was risking that in my documents the infamous word which would brand me as lishenyets would be posted.

Since I was not the only one in this situation, I contacted my friend who was working at the hamlet of Nikitovka in The Hamlet's Soviet office and who knew what others were doing in such cases. He told me, "To try to do something about it locally does not make any sense. Others have tried it without any results. Those who are in power here are all Bolsheviks and are considering all ex-Whites as the 'enemies of the people.' But I would suggest trying to write a letter to Comrade Petrovsky. He is a very important and powerful Bolshevik. I heard that he has helped some people. Try, maybe you are lucky. I will give you his exact address."

I wrote a petition to Comrade Petrovsky, where I explained my situation straightforwardly. I stated that I had indeed been a volunteer in the White Army, but that I considered myself defeated, that I wasn't involved in any anti-Soviet activities, and did not intend to be in the future. I showed my petition to my friend.

He shook his head in disapproval and suggested, "Add reassurance of your admiration and loyalty toward the Soviet regime."

I rejected the suggested idea with indignation. I asked him, "Are you considering me as some kind of a reptile? I am already slandering myself by writing that I consider myself defeated! In general, it is horrible to write such declarations and to whom?! To the inveterate Bolshevik!"

"Well," answered my friend, "in that case, it is better you don't write anything."

"But what can I do? How can I live from now on? I have to work if I want to eat." My question remained without an answer.

After the death of my father my sister remained without the means to sustain her, and was selling some remaining household items and furnishings to buy food and at that moment we had not experienced hunger. But it was the future that concerned us. However, many of my father's friends were sympathetic to our misfortune and promised to get busy in finding her some work.

In the weeks following delivery of notices about being deprived of civil rights to the selected residents of Nikitovka by the Soviet authorities, my sister Vera came home from the market with troublesome news every day, "They have arrested Kopeykin, and the son of Vasyly Ivanovich... Also Gleb has disappeared..." Each of them like me was a lishenyets. From then on when my sister would go to the market she would lock me in the house. But coming home she was bringing more bad news, "Turchyk was arrested, and the son of Valentyna Alexandrovna... Also they have taken Petrenko."

Each day the situation became more troubling. We traced a pattern of arrests and found out that all arrests were done, for some unknown reason, during the day and that those who were arrested were mostly people who had served in the White Army that fought the Reds. We decided that until I made my decision of what I would do next, I would leave the house during the day and come home late at night.

I began to get up very early in the morning, take a piece of bread with me, and walk out of the house when there was not a soul on the streets. I walked far from the hamlet, where there were no people who could recognize me and whom I had started to mistrust. There, in the midst of fields and meadows that were just starting to awaken from a long winter, between gullies filled with fresh streams, and coppices beginning to awake from the warmth of spring, I passed my time until it began to get dark and only then did I return home. I especially liked to visit a place called Krynychka, which had been a popular place for outings for the hamlet's people in the past.

Krynychka was situated in a wide and deep valley with five steep banks meeting there, and in the bottom was a small lake surrounded by bushes and trees. Some time in the past a little dam had been made from which the overflowing water formed a pleasant sounding waterfall. Here, sitting near the water and listening to its harmonious sounds, I was listening to the music of time, not the present, but the past. I lived there with my memories.

There were other beautiful waterfalls cascading over the steep banks. One of the best was at the last bank where on the stone ledges the murmuring stream broke into

thousands of minute sprays as the water splashed to the bottom and formed snow-white foam. The running water and its sounds were endless and calming to my soul.

Above this most beautiful spectacle of nature, almost at the end of one of the banks among the big boulders, ledges, crevices, and gaps was a large slightly inclined plane. There, before the revolution, was a big apiary where the people from all surrounding areas, including our family, purchased honey for the whole winter. I remember going there many times with my father. I saw that it was now abandoned and I ventured to explore what had once been a friendly-looking place.

When I got up there I found that it barely resembled what it used to be. All the beehives had disappeared and tall grass and bushes grew up between the stone slabs, hiding the remaining refuge carved in a stone ledge. I remembered that in the spring and summer the beekeeper had lived here. He had been known to all simply by the name Dyed Korney, or Old Man Korney.

I entered and could still recognize what once had been white walls but were now darkened with the dust of time. Near the window stood a table carved from stone. In the middle of the table used to stand a big bucket with honey for sale. Now there were only some kitchen utensils scattered on it: an old tin tea-pot, a few tea cups, several empty glass jars that probably were used once for storage of honey, a plate and a wooden spoon, all of it intact but covered with a thick layer of dust. Near the table were three benches made from flat stone slabs placed on top of upright stones. On the opposite wall was a primitive stove, also made from carved stones rather than from the commonly used bricks. There Dyed Korney had cooked his meals. Farther away stood a small wooden platform bed where he had slept. Part of this refuge was allotted for keeping the bees during the wintertime and now it was an empty space.

My father had told me the story about what happened to Dyed Korney and his apiary. It happened at dawn early in the spring of 1921 when a Bolshevik detachment from a battalion fighting the banditry came to the apiary and demanded all honey that Dyed Korney could collect from the beehives.

Dyed Korney tried to convince them that this early in the spring one could not collect anything, because there was no honey yet. But the commander of the detachment decided that the old man did not want to give them his honey and started to destroy one beehive after another. To cover up their blunder they shot Dyed Korney in the head right in the middle of his apiary, where he was found after several days. There was no investigation as there would have been in the old days, and the murderers were never found. The commander in charge of the detachment fighting with the banditry had reported that the bandits destroyed the apiary and killed Dyed Korney. But the people who saw some of the bee stings on the faces and hands of the men from that detachment knew who committed the crime.

Now the tall grass and bushes hid this hideous crime, which the authorities were trying to bury in the past. Knowing this, I thought that this place should be relatively safe while the terrible story was still fresh in the people's minds, especially of those who committed the crime.

Indeed, I passed all my time alone in this quiet place and nobody disturbed me. I would sit or lie in the tall grass listening to the music of spring and think, think and think. Past and present were mixed together, but all I could think was, "How can I find a solution to my situation?" And the situation was becoming more and more complicated,

because every night when I returned home, my sister would tell me new cases of people—known and unknown to me—who were either arrested or had disappeared from their homes.

Easter was nearing. These were the last days of the Great Lent. But there was no great anticipation of the holiday as there had been in the past. The churches were closed, the bells were removed. But the people preserved their faith in the Almighty in the depths of their souls.

A few days before Easter Sunday my solitude was interrupted. I was sitting as usual near the water, where its sound did not allow me to hear the carefully placed footsteps. Suddenly somebody touched my shoulder. I was startled and turned to see who it was. In front of me stood a very old man with a long white beard.

"What are you doing here?" he asked me in Ukrainian.

"I am hiding from the people," I answered straightforward.

"Don't you say that! People would not harm you," he replied in a soft voice.

"They have already done so, Grandfather!"

"Maybe you didn't do something right to somebody," he continued to talk to me in Ukrainian.

"Who, me?" I wondered.

"Maybe you have done harm to somebody," he insisted.

"Why would I do harm to anybody?" I wondered again.

"Well aren't there many kinds of people in this world? All are different. There are those who are doing only good and there are those who do bad things. That depends on what is written in their destiny," he explained with common folk's wisdom.

"Well, old man, I had no reason to harm anybody. You see, I was treated badly by the authorities." I gave him a clue to my problem.

"That's how it is! You say the authorities? My dear, you think those are the authorities?" he asked me like he knew a better answer to that question.

To which I replied quickly, "Of course they are! If they are sitting in high places and are ruling the country, they are the authorities!"

"My dear young man! What kind of authority is that? I will tell you, there is in this world the authority given by God and then there is the other one imposed by the devil. You see, we had the Emperor Nikolay Alexandrovich, whom God gave the authority to rule. But those... How are they called now, those who took the power from him? It's a sin only to pronounce their name! Well, they are placed here by the devil. Do you understand?" he explained this complicated idea in very simple terms.

"All this I know very well, old man," I replied.

"Then what else do you need? Just live the rest of your life as a Christian, I mean, as it is written in the Scriptures. Be good to others and love thy neighbor," he preached to me.

"I know this very well," I said, "but what has one to do if they don't let you live? You see, they fired me from my work, and now I have no way to live," I complained.

"My dear young man, you should not sit here and wait, do as it is written in the Scriptures, 'Get away from the evil and create goodwill.' So, you should do the same. Why are you sitting here? Get away from here, because here for you is only evil. You understand?" he continued to teach me his old wisdom.

And I tried to explain to him, "This I also know, old man, but it is not so easy to

leave here! You know, we, the young people, are all registered..."

He interrupted me, "In Satan's notebook! I know, I know. But you, my dear, get to them with the Scriptures, and they will flinch away from you! Get to them with the words of God, because they are scared of His words more than anything else!"

"No, old man," I told him in resignation, "you cannot understand me! Are you from the village?"

The old man shook his head and smiled, "Ah, you! It doesn't matter, that you are from the town and are educated, but you think worse than me, the illiterate peasant! My friend, that's just it, I understand you, but I see that you don't understand me. Tell me, my dear, what kind of day is ahead of us?"

"Well, old man, Easter is approaching. But it brings us very little joy," I told him with a forlorn tone in my voice.

But he admonished me, "Don't say such things, my dear, don't take a sin upon your soul. Isn't this a joy, ah, the Easter Sunday? You, educated young man, for you, your own wounds are hurting more than anything else! Christ will be risen on Sunday! And what can be more joyful for people than the resurrection of Christ?"

I understood what the old man was trying to tell me and told him that I sincerely regretted all the bitter things that I had told him.

To this the old man replied in a conciliatory voice, "Well, that's it, my dear. You see, that's why I asked you about it, to know you better. You yourself told me that there is no more joy!

Then he asked, "Well, do you know why I came here?"

"No, Grandfather, I don't know," I answered puzzled by his question.

"Well, how should I tell you this? Our church was shut down," he began to explain and stopped for a moment like he was still not sure if he could trust me.

"I know this," I answered and asked him, "But, what happened to Father Gregory? Where is he now?"

The old man's face brightened up, "Do you know him?"

"Of course, he was my father's friend," I answered proudly.

"Well listen, Father Gregory is working in the coal mines."

"In the coal mines?!" I exclaimed with a surprise.

"He is saving his life for all of us sinners. He doesn't want to leave us, the members of God's flock. He visits us occasionally and performs a church service. Last Sunday was his day off. He should come to consecrate Easter. He would perform the Easter Sunday service."

The old man paused for a while collecting his thoughts, then explained, "That's why I came here. To prepare this place here, I mean to prepare everything here for this Sunday. You see, the road leading here is forbidden for the Bolsheviks, at least for a while, because they killed our old man here."

I inserted quickly, "I know, Dyed Korney!"

"You mean, you know this, too?" Exclaimed the old man. "Who are you? Tell me!"

When I told him about my family and myself, I felt that he finally did not doubt me, because it turned out that he knew my father and even me, in those days when I was a small boy.

"Well, listen," he told me, "our muzhiks decided to celebrate this Easter the old way. We don't have the church now, but... What you can do? This matter is remediable.



The matter is not a building, but the faith of the people. A religious service could be performed anywhere, even under the open sky. But we decided to have it here because everything looks almost like at Calvary, we even have a Gethsemane Garden. We have already notified Father Gregory; he will be here at midnight before Easter Sunday. That's why muzhiks have decided to make everything here, as it should be. To put it all in order and clean it up. And that's why I came here to make a surveillance."

"You have put a lot of thought into planning all this," I approved their ideas. "I can help you, because I have nothing else to do now, I am free as a bird!"

"Then get up," said the old man, "and let's go and see where and what we should do here."

I got up and we went to inspect the wrecked apiary. The old man walked unhurriedly and kept talking, "Here were my beehives... Those bees were God's creatures... What a place it was here! How much honey was collected here!"

Then his reflections became more spiritual as he told them aloud, "And Dyed Korney occupied himself with beekeeping for a good reason... Because you see, old people need to devote some time to earn forgiveness of their sins. He would sit here alone with the bees. It is obvious that he could not hold any discussions with them, but in his mind could be clear thoughts like the pure air here. So, the old sinner would sit here, praise God and ask for God's forgiveness for all his sins and transgressions... And the bees were also praying for him. And life for the old man became easier because in this place God himself could see that he was living the righteous life." After a while he added, "Now we have no place to save ourselves at an old age, because, you see, my dear, the comrades don't want us to collect honey!"

"Well, Grandfather, salvation is possible without honey too," I suggested.

"No, young man, you see, a bee is a God's creature. She collects both the honey and the wax in her hive. For men she provides honey, and for God she gives the wax for the candles as a gift. Now can you understand that she does holy work?"

"I understand, but I still believe that salvation could be earned not only at the aviary. Though it is peaceful here and it is true, it invites you to reflect."

Making our way through the tall grass, we came into Dyed Korney's stone house, and the old man's conversation became of a practical nature, "Well, now, let us see what needs to be done up here. We will pray in here; therefore, it needs to be cleaned thoroughly. Let us see what kind of tools we would need: axes, shovels, and brooms. The women shall paint the walls with whitening and will clean up inside. Here, we will make the altar; here, the right choir; and here, the left choir."

Then he looked outside and commented, "But how could we go with a procession around our church if it is carved in a ledge? Could it be that we will have to climb over that big rock? Somebody could notice us up there. We have to think well ahead of time. The people will gather... everything needs to be all right..." And he added with a smile, "Maybe even some party member shall drop in here. You know, some of them also want to pray to God."

"You mean you have those too?" I asked.

"Well," said the old man, "what can you do with the muzhik who yielded to temptation of having a Bolshevik party membership card, but still remembers God? Of course, their superiors should not notice it. Do you think that faith can be snatched so easily out of one's soul? Although many are party members, they were still christened.

So they are trying to get away from their Antichrist. Well, we allow them to come to us, as long as it is done with a pure heart..."

I wondered if this was an exceptional case and bombarded him with questions, "Tell me, old man, did you have such services before? Do the Bolshevik party members always attend them? Does Father Gregory always perform these services?"

"Wait a little, not so fast," he stopped me. "Everything we do is as it should be done by Orthodox Christians. Services are held in the right order. Father Gregory comes when he can, and when he cannot, he sends someone who can perform the service, you know, the monks, who are also in the mines digging coal..."

After a short pause he added, "Well, as far as the party members, those are our stupid muzhiks. They were greedy for what they could get free. As Bolshevik party members they could get all kinds of privileges—they pay lower taxes and they can shop in the party cooperative for all kinds of goods that we mortals have no right to dream about. But they haven't forgotten God and still attend our services."

While the old man was inspecting the apiary and what needed to be done by Saturday night before Easter, he continued to tell me about their secret church, "Of course, we are careful about how we conduct our services. Our church is mobile—one week we gather at Vlasov's house, the next week, at the Potap's, the week after that at somebody else's. That's necessary, so authorities won't notice anything. You know, they are very strict about the secret church services. But what else can we do if muzhik cannot live without prayer? They long to go to church and pray all together."

"But those who are party members," I wondered "don't they betray you?"

"How can they do that without giving themselves away?" he answered with a question.

"Maybe they come to find out who is coming and then report them to the authorities?" I speculated.

The old man admitted, "Well it could also happen that way, we thought about that, too. But we have all kinds of precautions. Not everybody can join our little church. Thank God, until now everything has been all right."

"How do you know what kind of intentions one has who is joining you? Maybe one who has intentions to inform just creeps into your church," I insisted.

"You know even Christ did not escape the betrayal of Judas Iscariot," answered the old man. "And who are we? Of course anything could happen. There are all kinds of men in this world."

"But, if this happens, all of you shall suffer!" I insisted.

But the old man answered calmly and wisely, "Christ suffered for all of us. Why should we be afraid to suffer for ourselves?"

I replied, "The times now are such..."

But he interrupted me, "The times now are like they were for the first Christians. Father Gregory told us how the first believers were tortured and killed. Until now God had preserved us from these kinds of sufferings. And, if it should happen, what can we do? We shall accept those sufferings, as any Christian would for his faith."

Then, suddenly he remembered, "We talk too much! There is a job that has to be done quickly—the holiday is nearing. Every thing needs to be done on time. In the afternoon I will send the muzhiks here to clear up the grass. And I will send the women too, to paint the walls with whitening, so we can welcome the Holy Sunday in the bright

house..."

This encounter with the old man happened on Thursday and I came every day to give a hand in clearing the place around the house. By Saturday one could not recognize the place. The space in front of the house was cleared up, bushes were cut down, grass was pulled out. The broken glass in the windows was replaced, and inside of Dyed Korney's house everything was clean and bright. Opposite the entrance door an altar was erected that was surrounded with greenery; the arch was made out of hand-woven linen cloth, and the right and left choir places were designed on the floor with chalk.

Toward evening the old man came to inspect everything and was pleased with the work. "Well, that's how it should be," he said. "Now we shall celebrate the Holy Easter, as is the custom for all Orthodox Christian people, with prayer and rejoicing together. And, as it should be in Orthodox tradition, all food that each woman has prepared will be brought here to be blessed: Easter cakes, paskhas<sup>8</sup> and krashenky.<sup>9</sup> God did not forget us this year, and we should not forget Him. The time now is such that the man becomes like a beast. Too many now don't think about God."

He looked at me and added, "These are bad times, nobody knows how one will die. You see, Dyed Korney lived here, and he lived here as if in paradise. His time came and he died with a martyr's death. They killed him for no reason at all. Poor man never said one bad word to anybody, but they took his life. And for what reason? Even now the muzhiks remember him and ask themselves, 'Why?' and 'Who?' The authorities should give the answer, but we aren't supposed to question the authorities, you know it yourself."

When the old man was satisfied with the inspection, he said, "Well, now I have to hurry. Father Gregory lives quite far from the village. I have to send a cart for him on time. Then I have to notify some more people about the service. I still have enough to do for today! I need to run to the village." The old man started down at a jog trot toward the road.

I decided to go home while it was still daylight to tell my sister to get ready for the unusual Easter service that was waiting for us. In a half-hour I was home. Though it was hard to find foodstuff, Vera managed to prepare a small paskha and make a few colored Easter eggs. She put this and a piece of lard and salt in two small bundles made from napkins, as it was traditional to bring them to be blessed in the church.

Before midnight we quietly came out of the house and went to the road leading to Krynychka. Because we had to walk almost all the way downhill we reached the improvised church very quickly.

When we came closer, we felt that something unusual was going on. An aureole of faint light was visible in the direction of the apiary, and a restrained sound of voices was mixed with the sound of waterfalls. When we entered the apiary of Dyed Korney, a beautiful pre-Easter view opened up in front of us—the improvised church was shining with candlelight and it was full of people, but most of the praying folks were standing outside. From the church we could hear the voice of Father Gregory, which I recognized right away. He started to bless the food that everybody had brought with them. After that he began the service. My sister and I found a space in the courtyard where we could see some of the inside of the church, hear Father Gregory saying the prayers and the subdued singing of the choir. We abandoned ourselves to the prayers.

Once in a while, the old man who organized this festivity came outside, climbed

somewhere up in the dark, and then returned. I found out later that there was an observation post and the old man was making a change of the observers to give everybody a chance to participate in the service. I didn't escape this duty and performed it as best I could, watching carefully in the dark and listening to each suspicious rustle, but, thanks to God, nobody from the authorities knew about our secret Easter service and all went well.

With the sunrise the choir without restraint sounded a powerful "Khristos voscresye!"<sup>10</sup> and people with tears in their eyes responded, "Vo istyenu voskryesye!"<sup>11</sup> They kissed each other and wished each other the great Holy Day, according to the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Joyful and happy in our hearts, peaceful and contented we returned home with the blessed paskha, eggs, lard, and salt. It was indeed a real Easter, though the service was held secretly like that of the early Christians in the catacombs.

## Petrushka

Do I really have to mention that it was the year of famine? Yes, I do, because there were no times of abundance yet, only years of famine and half-starvation. Petrushka, of course, did not understand what the times of abundance and the years of famine were; in the course of his short life he only knew that he was always hungry. His kiddy eyes, twinkling like shiny chips of coal, inquisitively studied the world that was opening before him and his slightly burry tongue continuously posed questions:

“And what is this?”

“And what is this for?”

“And why is this?”

“And how is that?” and peered into his father’s kind smiling eyes, who satisfied him with answers even though he did not always understand them.

The whole world smiled at Petrushka. His step-mother smiled, even though dryly and grudgingly; the neighbors smiled; smiled also some men, who came to his father with orders or for fittings. It seemed that even the wickedly vicious Arap—enormous shaggy dog, who was feared by everyone in the town—clinking with his heavy chain, would wag his tail, get up, shake off dust and smile through his long drab dirt-colored coat covering his eyes! But for some reason Petrushka was always hungry! He was hungry even while he was smiling back at other people! But why?

Petrushka quite seriously thought that everyone always wanted to eat. It did not mean that all of his thoughts and feelings, desires and aspirations were directed only at food. You could not say that he always starved, but he got so used to being half-starved that this state seemed the most common not only to him but to all other people too. I suppose, he was not wrong. There were so few well-fed people that it was impossible to encounter them on the streets! Possibly, they were simply hiding from the half-starved and starved people. Maybe they were afraid that they would be eaten right there, on the sidewalk?

To tell you the truth, he heard about how once upon a time people ate and drank—oh!—what tasty conversations were these! But it was so incredible to hear, even from the lips of his father, whom he absolutely trusted, that it seemed to Petrushka that he simply listened to a very deliciously tasty fairy tale.

Once his step-mother came from the market and, as usual, she brought some news.

“The cathedral will be closed!” she informed Petrushka’s father.”

“There is nothing to be surprised by...” the father replied to her, sewing a button to the jacket he was remaking. “You can close the cathedral, destroy, ransack it, but it is impossible to corrode the people’s faith!”

“They want to put either a theatre or a movie theatre there instead.”

“They can even make the cathedral into a public restroom! You can expect anything from them!”

Petrushka listened to the conversation and thought that his father knew

everything, understood everything and, judging by the tone of his answers, knew that “they” were not regular people, but the vagabonds. His father always called “them” this way, warning Petrushka, “Petrushka, look, I am only saying this to you, don’t tell anyone!”

“I know...” the little boy answered softly and he never told anyone how “they” were really called. Because if his father tells him that, he should not tell, then he, Petrushka, would never tell anyone.

On Sunday Petrushka goes to the church with his father—to the cathedral—he passes through right to the altar and puts on altar-boy surplice. Batyushka—the holy Father—stands beside, quietly reads a prayer. He always stands this way and prays. Petrushka dared to ask, “Father, is it true that the cathedral will be closed?”

Father Constantine, after crossing himself, leans towards the little boy, “They say that, my dear, they talk... Well, my dear boy, this government is not ours—it did not come from God. We’ll pray...”

And Petrushka prayed. He prayed through the whole mass. And it looked like God had heard his prayers. The rumors died away.

Two priests with a deacon served the mass in the old cathedral every day because it was the time of the Lent. And the cathedral was very old, an imposing one, it was the only building like this in town! What beautiful services there were in this cathedral! Petrushka loved this splendor, he loved the beautiful, soothing singing and always sincerely prayed about all the people. But especially fervently he prayed for his deceased mama, and even though he did not remember her, but his father often talked about her. He prayed also for his father, sisters, and brothers, and also for himself a little.

In those years there were many requiem services. People died too often. It was hard to say whether they died from sickness or from hunger. And the requiem services were performed not only for those who were buried by the priests, but also for those who died “there.”

Petrushka knew where this “there” was! Everyone knew! This “there” was not far away from the cathedral—you needed only to turn the corner, and there it was – “there.”

And usually for the memorial services the God-fearing women, old and young, brought some coliphia. They offered it to anyone. A spoon of it. Petrushka, though, would get everything that was left on the little plates. It was more than he could get on a little spoon. But the coliphia was always different. Some people made it with rice, others – with wheat, still others – with peeled barley, and there were yet some people who brought in coliphia with millet or even with semolina. And where would they buy rice, for example? It does not grow on the sidewalk! You can’t find it in the shops. And it was not affordable to everyone at the market. But Petrushka did not acknowledge all of that—he ate everything that was left on the plates.

Once they were so hungry at home that even the father, tightening his belt, uttered, “Oh my, how hungry I am!”

Petrushka was such a smart boy! Even though he was a little boy. And starting with the next day he began bringing home the coliphia that was left on the small plates and which the poor women gave him.

He even found a special jar for it at home. He cleaned it, thoroughly washed it and started to bring it to the cathedral, hiding it under his jacket, and usually brought it back home full, “Here is some coliphia for you, Papa, so that you would not be hungry...”

and the father, with the tears in his eyes, would accept the filial offering and eat it to not offend little Petrushka.

The Lent passed. And in the spring, after the Easter, the cathedral was closed. "They" closed it.

Petrushka and his father continued to live half-starved, just as they did before.

## For the Truth

*"Religion is the Opium of the People."*  
– Karl Marx

It was a melancholy, depressing autumn. The low overcast sky seemed to press down with an unknown weight. The monotonous rain poured for twenty-four hours at a time. At nights the wind howled in the chimneys, and made the glass rattle in the windows. The streets were muddy, and the autumn streams, carrying off the dust of summer, hurried somewhere far away beyond the town. From the windows could be seen the shining, wet colored roofs, the fences, and the bare polished trunks and branches of the trees, darkened by the rain, their luxurious summer dress long since shed. The occasional passersby, treading carefully on the muddy pavement, wandered aimlessly along bereft of hopes or desires, a look of fear and dejection on their faces! On one side of the principal street, in a building belonging to the secondary school, teachers from the Donets province were assembled for a course of retraining. The old school where they brought up the children to be "white-handed intellectuals" was now quite out of date. The new government needed new schools, where they trained "horny-handed sons of toil." It was for this new system that the teachers were being reconditioned. A new slogan had been now issued from headquarters. The new catchword now was "Polytechnization."

All the educational journals and newspapers featured articles on "polytechnization". Orders, instructions, circulars poured out from the central offices. Paper, paper and still more paper! What reams were written, read through, discussed, all about "polytechnization." Men and women teachers stitched boots and shoes, made rivets, turned nuts, made stools, bound books, forged horse shoes, made buckets. They wove, sawed, hammered, and banged, shouted and made a noise.

They attended lectures on "Polytechnization", on production methods, on the resistance of materials, on corrosion of metals, on scientific agriculture, on railway transport, on mining and metallurgy. They were all busy, many were enthusiastic, and most important of all, they were well fed and satisfied with the food provided during the course. Only occasionally in their few leisure moments, they asked themselves, "How are we going to fit all this 'politechnization' into the school curriculum, in the junior class? How are we to teach an eight year old child grammar on a turner's bench? Will they learn to count with horseshoes? with heavy hammers in the forge?" They supposed that the Moscow instructors would send information about all that.

At the end of two months the course came to an end. About two days before the last, the director of the courses announced, "Tomorrow, comrades, a lecturer from headquarters will give you a talk on anti-religious training of children in school."

The enormous recreation room was filled with desks. Young and old, men and women teachers were making their way slowly to their seats. The director bustling anxiously about urges the slow ones along the lone corridor, runs to the dormitories,



begs people to hurry, keens on calling everyone, and orders them to pass along.

At last the room hums with subdued conversation, the lecturer arrives on the rostrum wearing a student's coat, with torn buttonholes, and ordinary black buttons sewn on in place of metal ones. He puts his bent cap on the desk, opens his bulging portfolio, takes out a bundle of posters with thick black lettering, and another equally large one of notes. He tacks the posters on the walls with drawing pins. They proclaim:

"Down with religion."

"Religion is the opium of the people."

"In a free state there is no room for religion."

After hanging up the long posters the lecturer returns to the rostrum, polishes his pince-nez, pours himself out a glass of water and finally begins his lecture.

"Comrade teachers, the revolution gave us half our freedom. But we find ourselves still under the domination of religion, which not only denies us the possibility of knowing true freedom, but will check our revolutionary forward movement until we free ourselves from it. You, the builders of human souls, are called upon to free the children's intellects from the unnecessary rubbish which religion is now shown to be. The greatest of socialist thinkers, Karl Marks, has said, 'Religion is the opium of the people.'"

There was not a sound in the hall, the audience, with bent heads, persistently gazed at the floor. Not one pair of eyes was raised to the lecturer during his long address. The strange silence and stillness made the comrade from the headquarters nervous. It really seemed to him as if he were reading his lecture to an empty room. He raised his voice, then dropped it again, stopped suddenly, unconsciously began to shout, then stopped again without finishing his sentences. He tried every device to make an impression on his audience from the rostrum, but the room was dead, not the slightest sound came from the mass of people sitting in front of him. At last the two-hour lecture came to an end. The speaker took up the glass of water, waiting for some response from the teachers, but the room remained quiet and no one moved. The lecturer put down the glass, hurriedly pushed his notes back into his portfolio, and almost running, escaped from the room. The teachers still sat quiet and motionless, till they heard the familiar voice of the director of the courses: "Comrades, break for lunch. After lunch questions on the lecture."

Getting up heavily from their seats, the audience went to their rooms. Half way along the corridor, conversation broke out. All had a feeling of unpleasantness, something that was not quite boredom and not quite sadness, the teachers avoided meeting each others eyes. After lunch, the audience reassembled in the hall as slowly and unwillingly as before. When all the seats were occupied, the comrade from the central office again mounted the rostrum. "Has any one any questions they wish to ask?" He looked round all the silent teachers sitting at the desks, then, over their bent heads, he saw a hand raised.

"Your question?" he asked, glad to get at least one response.

There was a rustle of movement in the room, heads were turned, all eyes were fixed on the place where a woman teacher attending the courses was already standing up.

"I have no question to ask, but I wish to make a statement," said the young woman resolutely and walked up to the rostrum. The lecturer made way for her. He was

triumphant, at last he had broken the icy silence.

The woman teacher ascended the rostrum... Her head was slightly raised as she looked straight at the seated people. Her voice as she began to speak sounded firm and confident.

"One thousand nine hundred and twenty years ago, Christ was born. One thousand nine hundred and twenty years ago, by His birth He brought to mankind, the great light whereby the world recognized God. Christ brought the light of gladness to man in his intercourse with God, and taught him to love God and his fellow men. The life of Christ on earth, His teaching, His sermons, are the foundation on which, up till now, we have built and will go on building the training and instruction of children."

The heavy gray clouds parted, from the distant turquoise blue autumn sky, the sun spilled out bright rays and lighted up the golden head of the woman, her large deep blue eyes shone, in them burned the unquenchable fire of faith. The rays of the sun shining through the soft tendrils of her hair made a bright oriole round her head. At that moment she was quite extraordinarily beautiful and striking.

Scores of eyes followed with the closest attention her every movement and the expression on her serene and serious face. They drank in each word of her surprising and beautiful speech, fearing to lose the least sound of her liquid and velvety voice. They all forgot where they were, what they were there for, and why they were there. All their attention was fixed on her who, through her devotion, expressed that which was in the hearts of all the teachers.

The young woman, feeling her spiritual unity with her listeners, continued to speak with even greater fervor of the life of Christ, of his death and resurrection. She spoke in the words of the Gospel of good and evil, of the parables of Christ. She reminded them of the highest destiny of man, of his heroism, of truth and of love. She brought in the subject of daily life and viewing it through the prism of Christianity, she spoke of the fall of man, of his turning aside from Christian principles and serving Satan.

She said, "You deny God, you deny belief in Him. You can do this because you are powerful, but remember, neither denial nor prohibition nor martyrdom killed the faith of the first Christians. The people are again going to the catacombs. Once more the people will suffer, but you cannot destroy their faith.

"If you study the history of man carefully you will see that even the pagans, simple minded savages, seek a god. They are not to blame if their darkness, their primitive condition and lack of culture lead them to worship idols. And there at the feet of their wooden or stone images, they unmistakably but not sinfully, give themselves up to prayer, bringing sacrifices and finding peace, solace and satisfaction. But when at last they learn of the true God, with what unfeigned joy they enter into communion with the Almighty Lord: With tears they wash away the error of their ways, with a clean heart, like children they enter into the bosom of the Christian church.

"You wish to take away our faith from us, but just as a child must not be parted from its mother, so a man's faith must not be taken from him. You would have us maim the children's souls - No - in the Name of Almighty God we cannot do this.

"It is impossible to kill the faith in the soul. It is like a spark burning with an all embracing flame and you cannot quench this flame in the child's soul, just as you cannot quench the light of the sun which caresses our earth. You only can compel us by force to be silent about God, but remember the Everlasting judgment will require you to

answer for it. Do not obscure faith by service of the devil: Remember you are but pigmies before the everlasting Truth, therefore you are too weak and too insignificant to fight against Christianity.”

She then calmly left the rostrum and resumed her seat. And there also, the setting sun lighted up her golden head. All the thoughts and glances of the student teachers were turned towards her, towards that Russian woman who had dared to speak the truth to the messengers of the devil.

It was impossible to subdue the excitement in the hall. Every one began to move. They all tried to get near to her, to shake her hands heartily, to embrace her and to speak kindly and warmly to her. The lecturer hovered uncertainly a few moments near the empty rostrum, then seizing his portfolio and cap, he hastily left the room and disappeared behind the doors.

The night was wild, with a wind of hurricane force. The tearing and uprooting gale bent the age-old trees to the ground, and dashed great streams of rain against the windows, tore off roofs, and sign boards, and blew down fences. In the darkness of the old school building there were strange noises. They sounded along the long corridors and in the empty classrooms. Something poured down, something groaned, something cracked, was torn, crashed and loudly broke up into smallest pieces, something banged, roared and bellowed like an infuriated beast, and suddenly, amidst the maddening chaos of sounds and movements, the lightning flashed through the pitch darkness in sharp zig-zags, splitting the obscurity of the night and then a deafening peal of thunder followed shaking the ground, drowning the noise of the wild storm and with a loud rumbling echo, rolled away into the unknown.

On this frightful night the Lugansky secret police shot the unknown Russian woman, wife, mother, teacher and educator who dared to stand up boldly for the great truth.

## From the Past

*Let the Christ's resurrection / Our fallen spirit arise /  
And as if the sun's ray / Light up the path of banishment. /  
And the blessed words / Of Christ crucified for us /  
Shall serve us on our way / Like the emblems of the life-giving Cross.*

– Baroness S. Taube-Anichkova, "Christ is Risen."

The small town of Nikitovka—is in the center of Donbas.<sup>1</sup> It is populated by working people, little merchants, artisans, even peasants. Its national composition is diverse. Here there are many Russians and Jews, Germans and Poles live here, and there are also Romanians, Bulgarians, and Tartars here. At those times, however, no one gave significance to what nationalities one person or another belonged to. All were Russians, called *Rossiyaney*. They didn't talk about the religion of one person or another. Everyone knew that each prayed in their own way, but everyone knew that there is God, and everyone believed in Him.

In the little town there was a small prayer house, which, soon after the arrival of the Bolsheviks, was turned into a club. There was a synagogue, which was turned into a warehouse. And someplace were gathering Baptists and Evangelists. When the Soviet power was established, the clergymen, rabbis, and the assembly of Evangelicals disappeared in the little town. Everything was done away with. A fight with religion began. It was a rough fight, offending people's feelings.

Despite the fact that the people were persecuted for their religious beliefs, in the underground of the little town the clergymen appeared and secretly held religious services. The authorities knew about these secret prayer services, but they couldn't do anything to prohibit them by administrative measures. Therefore, every large Christian holiday was accompanied by intensifying anti-religious campaigns.

It is the spring of 1930. The trees are turning green. The first spring flowers are blooming. The sun is rather hot during the day, although it is still fairly cool during the nights. It feels like the summer is already not far off. Nature is coming back to life with extraordinary strength, everything is reviving, and everything is reaching upwards towards the heavens. And the people are perking up from the long, unfriendly winter.

Easter is approaching. Its solemnity is felt everywhere. In the people, in a tiny fresh green leaf, in a blade of grass, in a wildflower.

Lent is drawing to an end. Holy week is over. Tomorrow is Easter, tomorrow is the Easter Sunday. An incomprehensible joy and exultation are in the soul.

A unified labor school is located on the outskirts of the little town. It is a former Zemstvo<sup>2</sup> school. But now, after the revolution, they transferred a former gymnasium<sup>3</sup> here and established one Soviet educational institution, of which, at that time, Mar'ya Ivanovna K., former head of the Zemstvo school, was in charge.

On Saturday morning she received an order to "organize" an anti-religious procession throughout the little town. The Komsomol<sup>4</sup> instructors arrived, and she did not have the right to say anything to them. They became complete masters of the

school. And they began fervent preparation of the schoolchildren for the march.

The instructors arrived in the school not empty-handed. They carried with themselves bundles, in which were costumes for the march, wigs, and grease-paint. Everything was stored in the teacher's room. The very instructors themselves dispersed around to the classrooms and started to teach the pupils anti-religious songs, slogans, and ideas.

The kids were kids. The novelty was interesting to them. They didn't quite understand yet all of what was going to happen. And the unknown won them over. They sang diligently, shouted out the slogans, recited and portrayed the "priests," "deacons" and "monks" and quickly "mastered" the communist lesson.

Finishing the school day, the Komsomol members released the children, having ordered everyone to assemble in the evening. Of course, it didn't remain a secret to the parents what had been happening in school that day. And in the evening, by no means all of the children appeared at the school. The bulk of those who appeared consisted of Jewish children and Russian children, whose parents were party members. The "mass" represented maybe only one fourth of the whole school enrollment. But to the Komsomol's instructors this wasn't so important. It was most important, that it was possible to form a "column" with which to march through the little town. And before departure they practiced in the schoolyard.

The Jewish boys got dressed up as orthodox priests and shouted out anti-Christian slogans with pleasure. The schoolchildren sang blasphemous songs, carried torches and posters with hideous caricatures of priests and monks, who were beaten with a red flag and had the inscription "Kill the priests!" and of course, many anti-religious slogans.

Everyone was dressed in the costumes of monks, nuns, and clergymen. On their heads were headdresses resembling those worn by the Orthodox clergy, and miters<sup>5</sup> worn by bishops. On their chests hung crosses made from paper. Almost all of their noses were red, and dark patches were painted under their eyes. They shouted out the slogans under the command of the Komsomol members collectively—the whole column at the same time:

"Religion—the opiate of the people!"

"Close the churches!"

"Kill the priests!"

"Persecute the monks!"

The teachers had to escort this terrible procession and watch that discipline was maintained. They needed to help the Komsomol members in the march, so that the schoolchildren didn't scatter about.

I remember Mar'ya Ivanovna, who was standing indecisively before the column started its march. She watched the masquerade with terror, and obviously didn't know what she should do. She answered the teachers' questions absent-mindedly. Her eyes avoided looking straight ahead. The whole time she thought about something intently. Her forehead wrinkled unnaturally. She stood at the same place for a long time. The teachers stopped approaching her, since she didn't give them any sort of direction. Alone, she watched the schoolchildren, but I doubt whether she saw them and understood what was going on around her... Finally, she abruptly turned around and ran to the school where her apartment was. Thank God, the Komsomol instructors didn't

notice her disappearance.

I left the pupils as soon as the column began to move and hurried to the old teacher. The doors, fortunately, turned out to be open. I went into the tiny little corridor and heard a wild laughter. Without asking for permission, I jumped into the room. Tearing the clothes on herself, Mar'ya Ivanovna laughed loudly, and large tears hung on her eyes. A senseless smile gave a terrible expression to her face.

She didn't see me, and when I approached closer and took her by the hand, she jumped back from me, like a wild animal, bristled at me, and having spread apart her fingers, pointed her hands in my direction.

"If you, scoundrel, come towards me another step, I will strangle you."

I understood that Mar'ya Ivanovna did not recognize me, since she would never say such words to me. My efforts to calm her didn't lead to anything. She kept standing the same way, with outstretched hands in front of me, waiting for me to approach her. And if I really only made one step, then she certainly would grab hold of me like she was insane. Only luck helped me bring her back to a normal state.

A cat, sitting on the windowsill among a multitude of indoor flowers, having been frightened by the wild cries of its mistress, darted headlong from its spot. On its way it knocked against a pot of geraniums. The pot fell onto the floor, but during its fall it pushed down a small round table standing alongside the window, and a big glass vase that sat on it. Everything went crashing down to the floor, making an unimaginable rattle and clinking.

Mar'ya Ivanovna regained consciousness. I approached her, took her by the hand, and asked: "What's wrong with you?"

She looked intently at me in silence, and burst into tears. I laid her on the bed, found liquid ammonia in her medicine cabinet and revived her little by little. From scraps of her sentences, which she uttered through tears, I found out that the cause was the "march" of the children.

It was necessary to take measures to save Mar'ya Ivanovna from inevitable trouble. You see, there would be a "march" tomorrow as well, and Mar'ya Ivanovna, of course, could not take part in it in this condition. Besides, she wouldn't participate if she had been healthy. Really, would her conscience allow her, a deep believer, to do that? Of course not. And I summoned our kind doctor, who "diagnosed" a fit of malaria, having ordered her not to leave the bed. When the doctor left, on Mar'ya Ivanovna's little table lay the medical bulletin, which had given her the right to not work for a few days.

The teachers, participants of the march, having returned to school, recounted of how they walked through the deserted streets of the little town. It seemed that everyone around there had died out. There was not a single living soul. Not even one inhabitant showed an interest in the masquerade. The march did not realize its goal. But the hatred of the people for the red atheists had increased.

Not far from the school stood a lonely, as it seemed, deserted house. And in it at night an Easter religious service took place. Mar'ya Ivanovna fervently prayed together with her grown-up students who had become parents of the little Soviet pupils. The prayer service was difficult and painful, but out of the anxious chests of the simple people shouted out with joy:

"Christ is risen!"

## Komsomol Member Kulya

We met each other twice, once at the cabinet-bedroom of the manager of the children's home, second time—in my tiny room in which was not enough space for me even to turn around. In the cabinet of the manager, whom everyone called the Raven, the girl rewarded me with a nod when her superior introduced her to me.

"It is our secretary..." and she dismissed her at once, "You may go..." But when the girl left, Raven hissed, "Priest's daughter!.. And here she is—a Komsomol<sup>1</sup> member!.."

Thus, before our informal acquaintance I already knew something about one of the teachers with whom I would have to work.

In the morning, I walked twelve kilometers along the autumnal, muddy, black earth road; I was terribly tired and not having any assignments during the after-dinner time, I lay on a small bed, which was so short you could not even stretch on it, and instantly fell so deeply asleep that I did not hear that had someone entered my small cage. Making her way to me, the uninvited guest stumbled on a table leg and a heavy paper press fell down on the floor. I opened my eyes. In front of me was standing the "secretary," the "priest's daughter," the "Komsomol member." I wanted to jump up but unfortunately couldn't because there was not enough room to put my legs.

The girl, holding out her hand in a male-like manner, introduced herself, "Kulya! Hello! Let's be friends!" she said these words so affirmatively that it was impossible to refuse. "Here all the teachers are wenches." she continued, "I am fed up with them, if only I could escape from them at the end of the world, Do you know, all just looking for grooms!"

Seeing that nevertheless I was trying somehow to get into a vertical position, she rebuked me rather roughly, "Well, come on, do not worry, I am not a "muslin lady"—you don't need to arrange China tea ceremony for me!" And she sat on the bed, pressing me to the wall. "They did not see you yet but they had already the time to pick you to pieces!" She added with undisguised irony. "Oh, you are already highly quoted in our wench's stock exchange! Even wide, butted cooks' eyes are sparkling—a real man! Well, about it later." she did not give me a chance to open my mouth. "Today is a faculty meeting. Raven is assigning you on a position of teacher's supervisor. I will be your right hand as your secretary..." and suddenly lifting up her clothes she said, "You see, these little evils. They bring home cats and dogs from which the fleas are everywhere!" and she started to look for the "criminal flea" not paying attention to my embarrassment. "No," she started to laugh, "it seems to me that I have to go and change my clothes otherwise this disgusting thing will bite me to death." And making her way to the door she said that she would come to talk to me in the evening. Therefore, I did not have the opportunity to say at least one word.

Remaining alone, of course I reflected. There was no sense—teacher, secretary of the faculty meeting, Komsomol member, priest's daughter, inconsiderate search of fleas, roughness, which she did not hide. To refuse her friendship? What kind of man would dare to refuse a pretty and nice girl? I couldn't. But then, she did not ask for my

agreement. She did not look for a groom and she had angrily laughed, criticized the “wenches”—teachers and tutor—for their searches; there was no doubt that she was sincere. What impelled her to make friends with me? If she was looking for a friend among men there was a Komsomol member, a supply manager in the children’s home, as I learned later, but frankly speaking, he was over the Komsomol’s age, but she did not pay any attention to him. Maybe the reason was that the supply manager did not take any interest in wenches in the children’s home?

Anyway, Kulya was liked very much by the cooks, who every night had the visits from lovers, whom they very dexterously hid from Raven by letting them out through the kitchen window early in the morning. Kulya very sharply and roughly made sleazy jokes about “dark nights,” “white legs,” “fat women” and “bearded men,” and all kitchen workers laughed in hysterics.

Old stoker, whose duty was to take care of heat in the basement of the big former mansion, also loved Kulya. He loved her for her bawdy words. “There is a young lady!” he told me, “Everything on Earth is nothing for her! Cusses like a coalminer! Even a drunk could not have such a foul mouth!” And quietly was asking me, “Is it true that her father was a priest?”

I diplomatically replied, “I do not know...”

Even the supply manager could not keep from laughing when Kulya was telling the raciest jokes.

The more our friendship was developing the more frank Kulya was becoming—talking about the most shameful things with natural shamelessness—and when I did not know what to do with myself from shame—she only laughed, “Look at him, a bashful girl!”

Soon she appeared in my room at night. I already was in bed when suddenly the doors opened quietly, for a moment a stripe of light penetrated into my room, and Kulya appeared. Closing the door noiselessly, she quietly made the way toward me, took off her robe and got under my blanket, “I feel so comfortable here...” she excused her appearance in my den at so late hour and, pressing herself to me, lay till morning as if she had lapsed into oblivion, without any words, without sleeping, and without sign of wakefulness, asking only at dawn, “Are you sleeping?”

“No.” I answered.

“I also don’t sleep... It is probably time for me to leave...” and she carefully got up from bed, put her robe on, and slipped out of my tiny room.

That night was amazing. It was not a night of love, no—nor kisses, nor caresses, nor intimacy—nothing happened. We just were lying together in a little bed until morning in full silence. Each of us thought about our own vitally important but unfinished thoughts up to the end. The only thing I learned about Kulya at that time when it was absolutely quiet, maybe sad, and it seemed to me that she had some heavy thought in her heart. She was strange from the beginning of our meeting. And our friendship was also strange. She hid something from me, a friend whom she herself selected.

And during the day, as always vulgar, she rushed into my room and lifting up her skirt started to search for fleas, while saying with a laugh how the wenches envy her for the night she spent with me. “Silly wenches! Idiots! What do they understand about friendship? They need love, love adventures in the like of Decameron, in which they would like to play heroines in the most juicy places!” And then she started telling such



obscurity that I clamped my ears, which amused her even more.

"Look at yourself, Kulya! You know, you are beautiful! Pure, fresh and gentle like a field flower and from your wonderful mouth are spitting such obscenities!"

"Everyone likes it, except you!"

"So you want to please..."

"I? To please anyone?"

"So then, why you..."

"But what do you want? Do you want me to be varnished? To be "well-bred" and put under the pillow tallow candles? Or something better, to let men visit me through the window like our cooks do? Excuse me, please! The times are changing and customs too." Then, starting to pronounce unprintable words, she asked me, "Do you want to get rid of folklore vocabulary? Nobility, aristocracy have left together with their French-Nizhniy Novgorod<sup>2</sup> jargon (slang); now instead of it, the people's language arrived, the Russian national language!"

"But not that language that you showed me just now but that, which was before, which is now and which will be—the language which was used by Russian writers and poets to write poems, verses and prose!"

"Hand them all over into the archive! There are appearing already our proletarian writers and poets who possess our proletarian language!"

"Kulya, you are lying to yourself..."

"Your conservatism surprises me! You know, you are not sixty years old yet! Entire life is ahead! But not for people with such points of view as yours!"

When Kulya offered me her friendship she stipulated that everything between us should be open, everything should be told up to the end, everything should be clear for both of us. I often asked myself why she never said anything about being a "priest's daughter." Of course, I also had reasons not to tell her a lot about myself. Something was at odds. But what?

It seemed to me that in my room she was finding rest. Despite that she also tried not to forget her role of "progressive girl" with a Komsomol membership card. Sometimes she stated such ideas that were contradicting her Komsomol credo. I knew her already well enough and asked myself, "Why she was putting on rough and dirty clothes on her absolute inner purity? What does she want to prove and to whom?"

On one hand our friendship was very close, allowing us to open very secret thoughts, desires and hopes, but on the other hand, at some point this friendship was coming to a halt for both of us—for her and for me—and was not moving even one step forward! True, I knew that she was a "priest's daughter" but not from her. It was acceptable to talk about yourself within the limits of questionnaires that were filled for city board of education or for workers department of education. But it was not so difficult to judge not only me or Kulya but by the behavior of anyone, by their talking, by the manner they sit at the table and hold a fork in the left hand and a knife in the right hand and skillfully manipulating them, that all of us were very far from "proletarian" origin!

But no one played rough tricks with words as did Kulya! Why? Maybe, because she was a member of the Komsomol? She was the only one who should have belonged to the dominant caste, but did not belong. Did she understand it? Did she sense the unsteadiness of her Komsomol position? Did she want to show by her behavior,

roughness, and shamelessness that she is a part of that elite which governs, but was not being governed?

Our friendship proceeded on the same level until the last day. Kulya did not forget for even one moment that she was a Komsomol member.

Before Christmas Raven brought a longhaired Komsomol fellow who played badly on the out-of-tune piano the a communist songs. Collecting the children in the hall she began to teach them "Carmaniola," "The Internationale" and other "classical" works, such as poems of "Demyan Bedniy,"<sup>3</sup> preparing her pupils to meet Christmas because she did not trust their teachers.

Our friendship with Kulya instead entered a new phase. Kulya began to visit me less often and if she came, she could sit silently for hours. On Christmas Eve Raven declared that all the children's home would go to the city club for a meeting after which there would be an "artistic performance" by the children and a play would be presented by a local troupe.

In the morning children were ready to go. At the head of the column stood with a red flag an "over age child"—by the birth certificate he was twelve but looked like seventeen. Next to him, Raven was fussing. All teachers and tutors were by their groups, except Kulya. Raven was nervous as it was time to go out.

She sent a schoolgirl from her group for Kulya but the girl returned quickly and informed that she did not find her. Raven, feeling trouble, became more nervous and sent her schooled slaves, "Pavlik Morozovs"<sup>4</sup> with the strict task—by all means, find Kulya. Her slaves searched all over the house and huge park but could not find Kulya. The column moved to the town.

In the club in the depth of the stage, a priest was sitting and expecting the forthcoming debate. They brought him from some far village in order to act in a dispute against the representative of an antireligious group that should make a scientific report on a subject "Birth of the Christ or the Sun?" And it turned out that Kulya should have been a lecturer. Peering to the priest's face, I understood why Kulya disappeared. Her opponent was her father.

## Cross and Needle

When Gavryl Danylovich Berezhnoy returned to Slavyansk from the self-imposed exile, as he expected, he had right away plenty of work. Some of the first orders he received were from customers who were dissatisfied with the outfits made for them by the newly established Tailoring Cooperative Workshop. All of them complained about the sloppy workmanship on garments sewn for them there. Some even brought items that had been made there and begged him to fit them properly and make alterations, because the outfits looked as if they had been made to fit someone else's figure.

Then he heard from some of his former apprentices, who worked at the Tailoring Cooperative, that things there were not going too well. This happened because the Co-op had several tailors who called themselves "master tailors" but didn't even know how to draft patterns to fit their customers. Instead they cut the cloth by a set of patterns supplied by a government office in charge of all tailoring cooperatives in the region.

One of his former apprentices said, "You should only see the waste and pilferage that is going on! They should have closed the cooperative a few months after it opened, because it wasn't making a profit. But no one cares because the manager decides how much money to send to the Regional Government Tailoring Cooperatives Office each week. And nobody there checks on anything that goes on in the tailor shop or how much the Cooperative takes in from the customers. The workers just receive their established pay from the regional office."

One day, Gavryl Danylovich had an unexpected visit from his former apprentice, Styopa Bolotov, who had never learned his trade well enough to be a good apprentice. Nevertheless, he was now manager of the Tailoring Cooperative Workshop located at Soborny Square. Gavryl Danylovich, as usual, sat cross-legged on the katok basting in a sleeve onto a jacket. Comrade Bolotov, as he was now called, positioned himself near the sewing machine in front of his former master.

In contrast to his previous hostile visits before Gavryl Danylovich had fled to Yuzovka, when the newly transformed revolutionary, apprentice Styopa, had intimidated his former master with all kinds of threats, this time comrade Bolotov started conversation in a very conciliatory way.

After a few introductory conventional phrases asking about his former master's health, comrade Bolotov quickly came to the point of his visit, "I came to invite you, Gavryl Danylovich, to join our Tailoring Cooperative. You have probably already heard that we have many qualified tailors and apprentices there, so it would be in your best interests to join a good workers team."

"No, Styopa, I will not join your Co-operative," calmly but determinedly answered Gavryl Danylovich. "You don't need an old man there. You said yourself that you have many qualified tailors without me."

"Believe me, it would be greatly to your advantage," insisted comrade Bolotov, "Eight hours of work, then time off, no need to work late into the night to finish work for some demanding customer. In the Cooperative, 'we' set the time when the item will be

ready, not the customers. Also, for you there will be no special income tax to pay, which is imposed on private tradesmen. And the authorities will see that you became one of the workers laboring for the Cooperative, rather than for yourself. Nowadays, of course, Gavryl Danylovich, politics take first place."

No matter how much Styopa Bolotov tried to persuade his former master to join the Tailoring Cooperative, it was like beating his head against a wall, for the stubborn old man was unyielding. He didn't even stop basting the sleeve as if it were more important than this conversation.

"No, Styopa, I already told you, I will not join your Co-operative. You used to work for me, and you know that I did not allow politics in my shop. The Tzar might have been good or bad, but you never heard anything about it in my place."

"Yes, but what about the Soviet government?" interrupted Styopa.

"What about it?" Asked Gavryl Danylovich. And without waiting for an explanation, he answered his own hypothetical question, "Certainly, taxes imposed on private tradesmen are oppressive, but meanwhile, I still earn bread for my family." Then he raised his eyes from his work and added, "But, as regards working eight hours a day, it is too much for a man of my age. You see, here I can work for a while on these sleeves, and then I can lie down and have a little nap for an hour or so. Sometimes, I might not even finish one buttonhole in a whole day, and nobody complains about it," he exaggerated a little.

"We will fix up a cot, or perhaps a nice couch for you," Styopa said accommodatingly. "And, anyway, you will be only taking measurements from the customers, making fittings when they come in, and guiding the cutters in adjusting the patterns to the customers' measurements. You see, you will have plenty of time to rest in between... You don't even have to take a needle into your hand or sew on a machine!"

"That would not be working," Gavryl Danylovich interrupted him. "I couldn't do it that way. In any case, what would I earn?"

"Don't you worry about that, we will see that you are fairly treated, Gavryl Danylovich!" hurriedly answered Styopa with animation, hoping that his former master was ready to bite at the worm he dangled on his hook. Then—to be sure not to lose his perceived advantage in reasoning with the old man—he suddenly changed his persuasions from the sweet promises to fear tactics, "But, the main thing is the income tax imposed on private tradesmen. It will ruin you. Have you seen the new regulations? They will swallow up all private enterprises!"

"God is merciful," his old master calmly answered, "I will always earn a piece of bread for my family, and there is a well in the courtyard where the water is always clean and fresh."

Then Styopa Bolotov felt he needed to apply the more radical revolutionary methods of persuasion on the old man so he told him: "Well, there's still another thing. You used to be a man of property. You owned two brick houses, each two storied ones. And in your workshop you employed a master tailor, a foreman, and two young apprentices. All those things are looked upon now as 'exploitation of the workingmen.' Don't forget that you will be declared a lishenets<sup>1</sup> for all of that! And then, don't you forget, your children went to gymnasiums and universities and you paid for all of them..."

Styopa stopped for a while collecting in his mind all kinds of sins with which he

could blackmail his former master. Then, with an air of self-righteousness, he reproached the old man, "There is something more I want to mention to you, that's about that icon." And with a sharp gesture he extended the whole arm at the corner where it hanged. "You must take it down right away, Gavryl Danylovich, because all kinds of people come to you as customers, and that's religious propaganda you are promoting..." As he glanced at the ancient image while pointing at it irreverently with his finger, the dark face of the Savior looked down at Styopa with gentle eyes, and it seemed to whisper to him, "Take heed—you are straying from my ways." Styopa looked away from the icon and shrank back. For a few seconds, he looked as a puppy that has suddenly fallen into the water. It was obvious that his conscience was not yet completely smothered. It woke up for a moment and sharply pricked his hardening heart.

Gavryl Danylovich silently put aside his work, looked at his former apprentice over the top of his steel-rimmed spectacles, which were perched on the very tip of his nose, then he got up from his cross-legged position and got down from the large tailors table. Only then he began to speak calmly and resolutely, as if Styopa had not reproached or offended him, "Listen you disbeliever, I was born a Christian, I have lived a long life with Him, and I shall die praising His name. Don't you dare speak to me about removing my icons. Your mind has become muddled. I am the master in my house, and that icon is here to stay."

Then he changed the subject but still continued to lecture his former apprentice, "As for the past, it is not for you to talk to me like that, Styopa. You spent seven or almost eight years with me. You saw for yourself that I worked alongside you, yes, even harder than you. Because, when you had worked the hours for which you were paid, you had your time off, but not me. How many times I sat up the whole night long to finish work due the next day."

Gavryl Danylovich stopped to catch his breath and then continued, "You say that I had built houses. Yes, I built them by my own hard work and my reputation as a master tailor and an honest man whom the local merchants and the bank could trust to lend money to build those houses. I have never underpaid, nor cheated, nor robbed anyone in order to build them. They were taken from me before I could finish repaying my loan. Besides, those houses have already gone to the Soviet government, and it's no use remembering them. I don't even think about them. What's done is done and can't be undone."

Styopa stood there stunned by his former master's courage in opposing all of his persuasions and threats. He felt very uncomfortable, but there was no way he could stop him.

And Gavryl Danylovich continued, "Did you say I educated my children? Yes, I have educated them. It was my duty to do it. Am I not my children's father? It is wicked to reproach me for that!"

Then Gavryl Danylovich came closer to Styopa and, looking him straight in the eyes, said, "But, as far as joining the Tailoring Cooperative, what would I be doing there? When all is said and done, I am still a master tailor here, and my work is appreciated by my customers. But 'there,' with the shabby quality of work you do..." He didn't finish the sentence.

Styopa Bolotov knew that what Gavryl Danylovich said was perfectly true, but it annoyed him to be reminded that the "old man" was the master tailor and not himself,

and he knew that in the Cooperative Workshop were only assistants and apprentices working. Abruptly, with both hands, Styopa pushed in the chest the old man who stood too close to him and angrily said, "You will regret this, Gavryl Danylovich!" And he rushed out the door without any further words.

Gavryl Danylovich went out onto the porch. In his mind resounded Styopa's reproaching words and now answers that he did not had a chance to tell him flowed readily from his lips, "That disbeliever! The icon disturbed him! Doesn't he remember that I was an Elder of the Church, and it has not been just a year or two, but more than twenty years, that I have served God and the congregation, in what used to be the Cathedral, the very same one that the 'comrades Bolsheviks' have closed now and set up a Workers Club there. The blasphemers! And at another church by the cemetery, they want to open an anti-religion museum."

"There is a rumor in town that they will soon close all the churches in Russia. Ah, well..." He gave a heavy sigh, "It seems that everything will soon come to an end... The Bolsheviks have power and might... But they cannot shut out God the Everlasting, Omnipresent..."

The shaggy old yard dog, Arap, came up wagging his tail, licked his master's slippered feet, then laid his head down on them and gazed up at his master with sorrowful black eyes. "Well, my old Arapushka, we are both grown old and weak. It is almost time we retire. Still, we seem to be needed. They insult us, you see, but it seems they cannot get on without us."

Gavryl Danilovich slowly came down from the porch steps and strolled around the small garden. He didn't feel inclined to work. Thoughts of the past mingled with those of the present, emphasizing the gulf that existed between the full, vital life of his yesteryears and the emptiness of his life today. But however hard life was now, he felt a deep sense of satisfaction in knowing that his long life had not been fruitless.

The scent of the awakening earth and the spring flowers elated him; he loved to see the revival of nature and feel God's beauty in the tender flower petals, and in the fresh green garden. And as he slowly strolled along the garden path he continued to review his life in his mind.

"The houses, they, took them, they are gone. The children, that's a different matter. The oldest, Nikolay—an architect; he builds houses better than mine were. Tanya—she's a dentist; Tonya—is a schoolteacher; Nyusya—will be soon an eye doctor. Only Vanya didn't turn out so well. It's true he's a bookkeeper, but he tipples, vodka leads to no good. Well, I can't really blame him—for he's been chased around like an unlucky hare by hounds. And all because he joined the White army as a volunteer when he was a lad; he was not quite of age at the time. Even a wise father wouldn't have punished him for that. But now the new rulers take it out on him in every way they can, investigating his past and dismissing him from jobs."

Gavryl Danylovich's thought switched from the living to the dear ones who were gone forever from this life.

"And Shura, my sweet and gentle son, Shura, God rest his soul, he had been in the White army, too; he was a true patriot who lost his life defending Russia from the Reds. He had died of typhoid fever while recuperating from his wounds at the military hospital in Taganrog and was buried there. My wife went there to see that his funeral was properly done according to Christian Orthodox rites. Then my wife and my daughter,

Olga, died shortly after, both in the same year of typhoid fever in Yuzovka and were buried in the old cemetery next to each other. They are all gone—only I and my little son, Pyetya, are left. He must be educated, and then I can rest in peace.”

Although saddened and considerably aged during these few tragic years, Gavryl Danylovich accepted patiently his destiny as a devoted Christian. Once tall and erect, his back now was curved from long hours spent sitting at the treadle sewing machine or cross-legged on the tailor’s table while tailoring by hand. His once dark brown wavy hair had turned gray but was still neatly parted on the side. His bushy eyebrows were now also gray, and deep wrinkles furrowed his forehead. His long moustache was sprinkled with gray, and his long soft beard that was connected by the sideburns to his temples was now silver-gray but still shaped straight at the bottom. He smoked a lot, and the hot ash that often fell on his beard had speckled it with the burned reddish spots.

Gavryl Danylovich gazed thoughtfully with brown eyes at the trees covered with white spring flowers and at the paths carpeted with white petals and thought,

“But all this is not mine; it all belongs to my second wife. My dearly departed first wife never divided anything. But as for my second one, she always reminds me, ‘This is mine and that is yours,’ although I am the breadwinner.

“No, I could never find another woman as good as my first wife was... I have been fair to my second wife right from the start. I had established with her the same rules as I had with my first wife. I allowed her to manage the money needed for food and other household expenses, and I am responsible for managing and disbursing the money for big expenses such as heating, home repairs, clothing and taxes. This allows us to share in managing the household and gives me enough freedom to help Nyusya until she graduates and for me to have some savings for a rainy day. But my wife is never satisfied with this arrangement. Besides, she favors her two sons in everything, all the while reminding my little Pyetya that he is not her son, making him feel unwanted.”

A few days after Styopa Bolotov’s visit, Gavryl Danylovich received a notice from the Town Soviet stating the increased taxes levied on him as a private craftsman. The income tax was more than three thousand rubles and had to be paid on time. Gavryl Danylovich took the news with contempt by reasoning, “If I sold up everything that I own, even then I would still be in debt. I know that the Tailoring Cooperative wants to have my good name—Master Tailor Berezhnoy—it would be a feather in their hat. Well no matter, I will carry on the fight while I still have strength!”

Gavryl Danylovich knew that all the smart people in town came with their orders to him and not to the Cooperative, because their fabric was wasted if they took it there. When the customer brought in material for a three-piece suit, they scarcely got a two-piece out of it, and even that fitted shamefully bad. How many of these workshop-made suits he had already altered! “I will charge my customers more so I can pay my taxes, he decided.”

Shortly after receiving the tax notice, a Town Soviet official arrived, the manager of the Financial Department, himself, comrade Gorbunov. It was not the first time that Gavryl Danylovich had made suits for him. He knew that Gorbunov was very particular—he liked to dress well and had a very good taste.

He also knew that Gorbunov valued him because no other tailor had ever fitted him better.

“Good day, Gavryl Danylovich,” Gorbunov greeted him. “I have come with some

rather urgent work for you.”

“Good day, Vasyliy Illarionovich,” answered Gavryl Danylovich with a sorrowful expression on his face and shaking his head. “I am afraid you will have to wait; I have a lot of orders on hand. It has been a fine spring and every one of my good customers wants a new suit.”

“Come now, you know me, we are old acquaintances. You know I will treat you fairly, Gavryl Danylovich.”

“I am afraid it is I that will not treat you fairly, Vasyliy Illarionovich. I have to raise my labor costs considerably.”

“Why? Has bread become dearer, or needles?” Gorbunov laughingly questioned him.

“Neither the bread, nor the needles have increased in price lately, but your tax notices have got dearer.” And Gavryl Danylovich drew the fresh tax bill out of his waistcoat pocket and handed it to Vasyliy Illarionovich.

The manager of the Finance Department looked at it and smiled, “Oh, oh! Old man, if you sold everything you possess, you would not be able to clear yourself.”

“Why should I sell out? I will pay it,” Gavryl Danylovich answered decisively.

“And how you intend to do that? Rob the state bank?”

“Well, let me explain it. You need a three-piece suit, don't you?”

“That's what I came here for.”

“Well, from now on my charge will be five hundred rubles for this work, Vasyliy Illarionovich—I can't do it for any less, if I am to pay my taxes.”

“Well, well, Gavryl Danylovich, what you would say if I told you that you must continue to charge me at your old price...”

“Two hundred rubles?” the old tailor questioned.

“Yes, two hundred rubles.”

“But in that case, I will not be able to make the ends meet!” exclaimed Gavryl Danylovich.

“Wait a minute, let me finish,” Vasyliy Illarionovich interrupted him, “give me a piece of paper.”

Gavryl Danylovich tore a clean sheet out of the notebook that he used for writing down details of his customers' orders and handed it to him. Vasyliy Illarionovich swiftly wrote filling half a page, then said, “Have someone else copy this for you, so it will not be in my handwriting. This is an application to the Regional Finance Department to have your income tax lowered on the grounds of ill health and old age. There is a regulation about this, but only they have the authority to lower the taxes. When they inquire our office about you, I will personally take care of it. You will pay less tax than you paid before receiving this notice.”

“Thank you, Vasyliy Illarionovich, Then everything will be in as before—the price, I mean.” Gavryl Danylovich assured him.

“Yes, but you'll make my suit as soon as possible?” prompted the manager of the Finance Department.

“Can you come to be fitted in three days' time?” Gavryl Danylovich replied with a smile.

“Of course, I can!”

“Very well, in a week your suit will be ready.”



"Good! That's the way to treat your good customers!" And Vasyliy Illarionovich then explained what details he wanted, what style of buttons, what shape of the lapels and the collar... Gavryl Danylovich checked his client's measurements, just in case he might have gained a few pounds, and then they said goodbye, each happy with the other.

"Nothing can be done without God's help," thought Gavryl Danylovich, "but I won't go to the Cooperative Workshop!"

The summer passed. Everything settled down and was calm. The Tailoring Cooperative worked for themselves and Gavryl Danylovich worked for himself. His taxes, thanks to Vasyliy Illarionovich's help, were now lowered. And none of his customers were ever charged five hundred rubles for a suit.

But the life under Soviet rule was full of unexpected happenings, some of them comical, as in the case of his taxes. Others did not make any difference for Gavryl Danylovich, as in the case of his voting rights. Before elections were held for Soviet government offices, he received a notice informing him that he had been deprived of voting rights because before the revolution he had owned two brick homes and his own tailor shop, in which he had "exploited a master, a foreman, and apprentices".

"Big deal!" Gavryl Danylovich commented. "As a 'lishenyets' I don't have to go and vote for candidates whose names are on the ballot only because they are Bolsheviks and not because they know how to govern." Then he thought about his son, "It's, however, a different story for Ivan, who is also deprived of voting rights because he was a volunteer in the White Army. It is a tragedy for him, because he cannot find steady work. As soon as they find out that he was a 'lishenyets,' they fire him. That's why he started drinking. But vodka does not lead to anything good."

Of course, some of the unexpected happenings were just plain dreadful, like the time the government needed gold in order to pay for the industrial equipment bought from the capitalists countries. This time the government desperately wanted gold. You had to give them gold, even if you were broke! In the cities, towns and in the thousands of small hamlets and villages all over the Russian land, millions of people lived in a state of wild terror. Men and women took off all their rings (even their wedding rings), Christening crosses, earrings, and locket and hid them in the most inaccessible places. They buried them in the ground and plastered them into walls, but still the GPU<sup>1</sup> agents obstinately demanded, "Give us your gold!"

One day Gavryl Danylovich's turn came. A GPU agent called on him. The old tailor was sitting cross-legged, as usual, on his tailor's table with one foot tucked under him, working silently. The GPU agent entered without knocking, pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and, reading the name on it, inquired, "Which one here is Berezhnoy?"

"I am," answered Gavryl Danylovich.

"Get ready, old man, and come along," GPU agent ordered.

"Where to?"

"To the GPU," was the short and simple answer.

There was nothing else to do, but to get ready and obey the agent's order, because Gavryl Danylovich knew that he could not refuse to go when summoned by that infamous government institution. So, he just buttoned up his shirt collar, put on his jacket, and followed the agent.

At the GPU they didn't bother to waste words, "Give us your gold, old man!"

"Where am I supposed to have gotten this gold?" asked Gavryl Danylovich in

astonishment.

"We know where from. You'd better not deny it. Hand it over!"

"I tell you, I have none," replied the old man.

"You had better hand it over at once," they said, "otherwise, it will be the worse for you."

"I am telling you, on my honor, that I have no gold," he insisted.

"You can't deceive us. You built two houses on Kharkovsky Street. You also had a tailoring workshop and exploited your workers. You educated your children at gymnasiums and sent them to universities, and now you pretend you have no gold! Shake your coffers well; you will find some."

Gavryl Danylovich was in no doubt as to where this denunciation came from—Styopa Bolotov. "Well," he said, "that's just where the gold went—to the houses, to the schools, to university fees, and to my tailoring business. You should ask the person who informed on me how much money he received from me in gifts over all the holidays, for Christmas and for Easter."

"Nonsense, old man, you are talking through your hat, your houses are proof of it!"

"You should ask..." Gavryl Danylovich started, but they did not let him finish.

They ordered very sweetly, "Give us the gold, or you'll be sorry if you don't."

But Gavryl Danylovich continued to repeat, "I have no gold and never have had, because it all went to build the houses, to pay for schools for my children, to the business, and to pay my helpers. I always paid them well."

"I will give you until evening," told him the GPU agent sternly. "Think things over well. And don't come back here telling me lies!"

They took him to a cell. The place was full; there were many once well-to-do people there. One cried, another laughed, and another could not hide his intense agitation. Gavryl Danylovich greeted them all. Although he was well known to everyone there, they were so preoccupied by their own troubles, or so thoroughly frightened, that none took any notice of him. So, he sat down in a corner on the stone floor and began to pray silently for his children. He didn't think about the gold, for he had none. He always spoke the truth and had never known how to lie.

While he was sitting in the corner praying, the GPU agents searched his home. They questioned his wife demanding that she show them where the gold was hidden. The terrified old woman, trembling from head to foot and crossing herself repeatedly, answered them, "What gold, my dears? We are not robbers."

But the agents ransacked the house, ripping open pillows and feather beds and examined the icons. Then they looked into the shed, went through the garden and the courtyard. They even searched the well, but they could not find any gold.

Late that evening Gavryl Danylovich was called back for the interrogation. "Well, old man, we found all the gold at your home," the GPU agent declared convincingly.

"Impossible!" Gavryl Danylovich exclaimed.

"Your old woman showed us herself where it was hidden."

"Well, then it must have been her own gold."

"What do you mean hers?" the agent asked him.

"Obviously, as I have no gold, there wasn't any of mine, so it must have been my second wife's gold. I don't know all the things she has in her possession," he explained

plainly. Then he added, "Let her show me where she was hiding it."

Since the agents could not break the old man with their deception, they resorted to scare tactics, "You know if they find gold at your house, it will go hard with you. If you have deceived us, you will be shot."

"God is merciful..." replied the old man. Gavryl Danylovich unbuttoned the collar of his shirt and drew out a cross on a black cord. Then he took out a needle with a long thread, which he always kept stuck in the top left-hand pocket of his waistcoat, and showed them to the Chief of the GPU, who this time was interrogating him, and said proudly, "Cross and needle—there is my gold. You can take the needle. You will never take the cross."

They let Gavryl Danylovich go free. They did not take the cross. It was only silver. There were no orders to collect silver at that time.

## On the Road

Once I have been asked: "And how it was Christmas celebrated in the Soviet Union?"

Frankly speaking, I was stumped with this question. You see, in general, in the Soviet Union there were no religious holidays since the Soviet government, which included exclusively only the members of the communist party, does not believe in God only itself, but it carries out a brutal fight against all of those who believed, those who celebrated Christian or any other religion holidays. How many servants of God, clergymen, and how many most ordinary lay people have been perished in exile or in the torture-chambers of CheKa<sup>1</sup>-GPU<sup>2</sup>-NKVD<sup>3</sup>-MVD<sup>4</sup>-MGB.<sup>5</sup> There is no count of the martyrs who took on sufferings or death in the name of faith!

Did we celebrate Christmas? Yes. Secretly. Covertly. For people did not lose their faith in Almighty God. And every such holiday was celebrated within the close family circle.

I recalled not very ordinary Christmas in the middle of nineteen hundred twenties. True, it did happen "at the dawn" of communism, however at that specific period the authorities were particularly notable for being extremely cruel towards the believers. And that Christmas that I experienced was nothing else but a proof of the enormous faith of our people.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day of that year did not fall into weekend days and therefore everyone had to be at work. People did reconcile themselves with that. However, after the working day they didn't go to clubs where on such days were organized the so called "scientific" anti-religious lectures, but most people rushed home to spend at least the evening in a holiday mood with close folks.

In the morning of the Christmas Eve, a school principal offered me to go to Slavyansk to the Teacher's Professional Union with the school matters. I was very happy to take this business trip, which in itself was a kind of holiday, since in an unknown city I could go to the Cathedral that hadn't yet been closed by the Bolsheviks.

In the good old times it took about four hours to go from Nikitovka to Slavyansk. However, during the "happy" soviet time, one had to catch an occasion because there had been only one regular passenger train guarded by extreme security protecting the passenger class cars from the assault of "bag-carrying"<sup>6</sup> people and passengers from the bandits who continued to give trouble to "dear" soviet state authority. It was extremely difficult and almost impossible to get on this train, therefore, right away I gave up the pleasure to travel in a warm passenger car.

I spent the whole day at the railway station. From time to time I called on the assistant station-master to check upon the freight trains. He knew me since childhood and every time answered with a smile: "Ulita is coming!"

This "Ulita" happened to be extremely peevish. One could wait for it only at the station, because none of the railwaymen could say when it's going to appear.

I have wandered around the dirty station waiting-halls the whole day and only late

in the evening assistant station-master told me: "There's an empty freight train in the northern railway yard and the locomotive is steaming. Hurry up!"

I thanked him and went towards a remotely located northern railway yard. The moment I stepped away from the platform, I was immediately grasped by the night with fog and thaw, with the smoky air and pitch darkness. Here and there could be seen the lights of station lampposts, but in the fog they all looked dull and almost gave no light.

I was dressed "in the latest fashion". I was wearing my mother's semi-coat underneath and my father's demi-season coat on top. My feet were in old boots that for long time asked for repair. The boots were leaking and every step of mine was accompanied by strange musical sounds: "chkvai-chkvai", – said the left foot; and the right foot whispered, – "f-f-f-uhhh." The further I was going, the stronger I could feel the cold of water penetrating into my boots. And my "winter" clothes, permeated by fog during the whole day, did not keep me warm anymore. However, what could you do? The business trip was "urgent". I had to bring some kind of a report to the cultural department of the Teachers Professional Union! But the most important – Christmas away from work!

I have been walking quite a while along the railway lanes, stepping into soft snow underneath which was water, got into ditches, stumbled over the rail switches, which did not have any lights. Finally, after overcoming all obstacles, I had reached the northern railway park.

I remember... I am walking between two endless trains. My instinct prompts me which of these trains would leave soon. It stands silently somewhere in the remote corner, on the spare tracks and waiting for something. May be for me?.. I walked beside it, but could not see the freight cars, as it was dreadfully dark. I could only guess what was around me. I looked bravely into the freight cars but could not see or identify anything.

Having passed half of the freight cars, I realize that I was surrounded by an invisible life. I caught sounds of rustles, whispers, bated breathing, and even some subdued coughing reached my ears, and it made me feel not quite myself. I hurried up towards the locomotive with the hope to get a place near the burner and get warm. Known to me the engineer and the stoker told me with regret that the security guards will be traveling with them. And I quickly tried to choose the "best freight car" and almost succeeded.

The freight car, which I had chosen, was comparatively clean and dry, however, some passengers were in it already. In the beginning they kept quite and didn't give any signs of normal life, but when they realized that I was a similar traveler as they were, they quietly asked me if I knew when the train was to set off. Unfortunately I couldn't give them any answer.

We were semi-lying and semi sitting on the floor for quite a while silently waiting for departure. Nobody said a single word. All were listening to the vague railway night sounds, sometimes pricking up one's ears, holding one's breath and moving closer to each other. But as soon as the silence outside was re-established, one could again hear free breathing, unclear whispers and deep sighs. This sense of alertness was transferred to me as well, though I was not afraid of the security guards as I was on an official trip.

Late at night the whistle of a locomotive reverberated and our journey started.

The train was moving restlessly and uneasily. The whole train shuddered when a mechanic accelerated for some speed, or jerked when climbing at the slope upgrades where it needed to pull the huge multi-freight-car train using foul fuel. The freight cars were swinging from one side to another, squeaking with the buffers, the wheels knocked at the junctures, and inside the freight cars reigned a dead silence as if they were absolutely empty.

The train began to gain speed. We have been swung about stronger and stronger. The noise and the clang of metal filled pitch-black darkness. I imagined the thrown all over the cold floor people – hungry, chilled to the bone, tired but alive, breathing and thinking... About what? Perhaps about daily piece of bread.

We have been traveling for about an-hour-and-half without stopping at the small stations. But then the train began to slow down and within several minutes it stopped. Somebody stood up, carefully overstepping the other passengers he scrolled towards the freight car door, moved it and, looking into pitch-black darkness, announced: "We have stopped in the field!"

This was enough to make everybody in the car to talk. Voices came out of the darkness. They were taking about the reasons for stopping, about the semaphores and faulty locomotives, about engineers and conductors. But nobody tried to leave the freight car to find out the real reason of the stop. You know, the train cannot stay in the field forever! Sometime it should restart its journey forward!

In absolute darkness it was impossible to figure out how many people were in the freight car, however, from the voices coming from different corners and from the neighbors pressing themselves to me, I could guess that "all seats" were occupied.

We were all obviously fairly frozen, and only the crowdedness was warming us up slightly. The talks haven't stopped. Everyone wanted to reach Slavyansk by morning so that they could exchange old rugs into some eatables. There have been assumptions of what would be the best exchange deals.

A sudden stop in the field broke the long involuntary silence. Now nobody was afraid of the security guards. Passengers spoke loudly without listening to what was going on outside the freight car.

Suddenly a quite and smooth voice was heard: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will toward men..." In the darkness somebody began to sing, and all kept quiet. It seemed that the dark walls opened, the fog lifted, and a Lodestar lit up in the serene sky.

"Christmas today..." – the words have been flying around, and the strong sounds of the improvised choir resounded in our freight car:

"Thy, Nativity, O Christ our God, Hath shined upon the world the light of knowledge. For thereby, they that worshipped the stars were taught by a star, to worship Thee, the Sun of righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee..." The chorus was carried from our freight car into the fog of the field passing to the neighboring freight cars. There was hardly a pause in our improvised verse, as we could hear from the nearest car: "O, today the Virgin gives birth to the Saviour"...

And we joined: "...and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels sing His glory with the shepherds, the Wise Men journey with the star, for there is born for us an infant Child, promised by God Eternal".

The last words could not be suppressed by the noise and clang of the train resuming its journey. Fatigue and the need for sleep, and the relentless cold disappeared somewhere. And the soul felt so good and comfortable from an interaction with the newly born Child, that the surroundings stopped being so horrible and cruel. It stopped freighting all those who were afraid of security guards, it assured those who were in doubt, it empowered those who were losing hope for the better future...

The Christ was with us!

## Because He Was Right

Uncle Simon was a clever and sensible man, he realized there was nothing else he could do but to join a collective farm voluntarily. As he was an elderly and experienced farmer, they made him the shepherd. Of course, it was better to look after sheep than to be banished, and it was quite an easy sort of life. After all, you can say anything you like to sheep.

What Uncle Simon liked best of all was to talk politics. Singing church music was also important to him. He enjoyed to go out early in the morning into the fields and sing through the service. He would turn to face the east, cross himself, and then he would sing "Holy Lord," "Our Father," and "Cherubims," and it seemed to him that he was once more in the church choir, and the images of the blessed saints appeared before him. There was a time when he had sung in the church choir before all houses of worship had been closed, and then the congregation listened attentively to him; now the sheep could listen to him instead. Well, perhaps, it was better that way. A sheep is a dumb animal. What can you expect from sheep? They are too stupid to understand anything.

Political events at that time were quite unpredictable and everyone, both high and low, was very apprehensive. Even the closest of party comrades became enemies. Uncle Simon read the papers and the sheep grazed. True, it was not always the latest edition; in fact, sometimes it was quite old. Was it likely that a collective farmer could afford the subscription for a new copy just for himself? There was no money to buy tobacco, and not only tobacco, sometimes one was obliged to borrow matches from a neighbor. As for tea and sugar, he even forgot to think about them, and he was no longer his own master.

One day, Uncle Simon took a newspaper with him into the fields with the sheep, but it was an old one of the previous year, published at the time when the proletarian court was hearing the case of comrade Bukharin. The case went on for a long time, but finally Bukharin was shot.

"Why did they shoot him?" Uncle Simon wondered. "He seemed to be a clever man, and he appeared to be secure in a very high position, one might almost say, he was a friend of Lenin himself, and yet, suddenly, there was this harsh trial and even a harsher sentence."

In the evening, Uncle Simon drove the sheep back to the collective farm. He happened to meet comrade Lavrenov, a party organizer of the collective farm. Everyone, formerly, had called him Petrushka, but now that he was party organizer, it was not allowed, now he was "Comrade Lavrenov."

"I know," thought Uncle Simon, "I'll ask him," he works with the government and politicians, perhaps they explain things better to him, than what is written in the papers. Yes, and, although he is a politician, he is a farmer himself, and I shall understand him."

As soon as the party organizer met him he said, "Well, Uncle Simon, how are you? That is to say, how is your flock getting on?"

"Oh, they are all right, comrade Lavrenov, you know yourself, sheep are just sheep."



It's getting warm though; it is time they were sheared."

"Well, did you speak to the governor about it?"

"Speak to him? Of course I spoke to him."

"And what did he say?"

"He said, I have no time to think about that now. I have enough to attend to without that."

"All right, I will mention it to him. But was there anything else you wanted to ask me?"

"Well, there is one thing I would like to know. Are you very busy now?"

"That's all right, just tell me what it is."

"Well, in the papers, I read that comrade Bukharin..."

"He is no comrade; he is a class enemy."

"Perhaps I may be mistaken; I am not an educated man, comrade Lavrenov."

"What is it you want to know?"

"I want to know why he was shot. I do not understand..."

"Because, Uncle Simon, he belonged to the party of the 'right'. you read about that in the papers."

"Hm, yes I read that. And you say he was right?"

"Yes, he was a class enemy of the people... Well, I will tell the governor that those sheep need shearing; it is getting too warm."

The party organizer hurried away so as not to have to explain to the shepherd what Bukharin's crimes were, for he scarcely understood it himself. He had heard it said that Bukharin was "right" and that he was "an enemy of the people," and he just went on repeating what he had been told.

But the next day, Uncle Simon went with the sheep to a field long way away, and until evening he kept on saying over and over to them, "He was shot because he was right, do you see, sheep? But what was he guilty of? I do not understand present day life at all. If you are right you are shot, but if you are guilty, they put power into your hands. Look at comrade Lavrenov, Petrushka, as we used to call him. He was a shady character before, but now he is a powerful man. Well, do you understand it, you dumb sheep?"

## Christmas Joy

What could make a muzhik happy? Two hundred work-days<sup>1</sup> in a year? Well, this is not happiness as nobody could be well fed by just work-days. The Chairman of kolkhoz<sup>2</sup> may allow to distribute an extra pood<sup>3</sup> of potatoes from the farm poor reserves. It does not bring any joy either because one pood of potatoes – enough for three-four days. And then, depends how big your family is! It is just luck that Mytrich's family – is no more than one and two. And those who have the whole army—a pood of potatoes will not be enough for one day!

There is no happiness anywhere. You cannot even go to church to unburden one's heart and "talk" to the Lord, since God's temple was converted into a farm's granary. Happiness doesn't come from nowhere. But of sorrow – there is an ocean. Just look anywhere—there is only grief. Emptiness in the house and in the yard... Well, actually, no yard is left. There is no space for a rooster with a single chicken. They run to the neighbours' yard to turn round them! This is how is today's life. There is no joy for God's creatures in this world. And one should not even mention for any ordinary soul.

As Mytrich looks around—there is no happiness. But – heaps of grief. And not only does he feel it but his neighbours and the whole kolkhoz feel it. Occasionally they send him to town to get some fuel for the always breaking tractor, and while there Mytrich looks at the townspeople and sees also only misery. Maybe he has an eye to see it? Or maybe he judges according to his own sorrow? But it appears that neither he nor other people have happiness.

The heaviest grief happened to him in the spring. He had a wife named Anka. And, God forgive, once some fool called her Janet.

"Janet! Janet!"

Since then it spread around the whole kolkhoz to call her – Janet.

How did it all happen?

Mytrich's village became Frenchified from the Napoleonic past. They said there was such a French general who wanted to conquer Mother Russia. And because of him there is a lot of confusion in the village. Here is a soviet citizen by the name Morton, and there – Marseille or Bouget. Only first names are Russian. And it happened as the grandfathers and great-grandfathers explained this very simply. That French general was running away from Russia. But his soldiers were remaining on the roads. A soldier got tired, well, and he stayed. They stuck to the Russian peasant houses where it was warm and enough of nourishing food, so, they slowly settled down. They peered at the Russian pies and wenches. Well, pies found their ways straight into the French mouths. But it had been little bit tougher with the wenches. Because a wench would ask right away: "Would you come to our Church, heterodox? Would you become baptised here?" And when the French-heterodox agreed and kept his word, a girl married him. So, since those old times different French surnames took off in the village, like Lourie, Ruat, Bouget and the first names were Russian – Afanasiy, Nikita, Platon or Aksinia, Domna, and Vasilisa.

The young didn't know much exactly, what and why, and the elders didn't tell them much, especially in these troubled years. Because, due to the so-called "foreign lineage" half of the neighboring village has been sent to Siberia.

So, Mytrich Boroda turned out to be in a deep misfortune now. Such a great misfortune! His woman, Anka, was arrested in the spring. What for – nobody knows. Those "vultures" didn't say anything. They simply came during the day from the town, rolled right to the Mytrich's house steps, grabbed Anka and were gone. And left Mytrich alone. Only after several weeks when Mytrich reached the senior in command, he found out that his Anka – a "foreign spy". A French Anka. No not Anka... but some Janet. Even her maiden name turned out to be as some kind of mademoiselle Roget.

Mytrich returned to the village in sheer grief. His wife was a French woman! And who was he? It was just his luck that his grandfather's last name was changed from Bordeaux into Boroda by the illiteracy of the village clerk. Otherwise Mytrich would be in the same place where his Anka was now.

He felt sorry for Anka. Thirty years they lived together in peace and content. Their children were born and they raised them together. Educated. All made their way in life. They lived in town. And they helped him and Anka to deal with kolkhoz misfortune. Once in a while a spare piece of bread was on the table. Or they gave them some old, good for nothing clothes. Neither Anka nor he were left without clothes. Though it could have happened easily. Some in the village were like that—they don't come out of their house. In short, though Anka and he did not always have plenty of food but they didn't starve to death either. This is how important it is to live in harmony with the whole family!

But now his children warned him: "We will help you, Dad, but we need to be careful. We might not do it so often, so the people would not notice it."

Sometimes Mytrich has very bitter thoughts. Anka is dear to him. And the villains have stolen her. It would have been better if they have taken him instead of Anka. You know, he is also a "foreign spy"! And he was not happy with that freedom, which had not been taken from him by the "town hawks."

It all happened very simply. When one fool began to call Anka as Janet, the name did spread throughout village. Perhaps, it was too loud so that it finally reached the town. And it is known what kind of people are there. "Janet?" It definitely means a "spy." Well, so they took her.

What shall Mytrich do now? He knows he cannot help his Anka. The power in town is such that he cannot overcome. His unhappiness anguished him so much that he cannot see a divine light ahead. He cannot even keep from shedding his tears: Anka is not with him. Anka, with whom he lived thirty years in perfect harmony. He still loved his wife as much as he loved her when they were young. So the tears run down and he could not stop weeping. Even at work, the anguish strikes hard. He cannot forget his Anka. Everything is falling from his hands.

Even the house turned to be out of kilter. When Anka was here, she kept everything in order. And now – where is that tidy house? The rooster and chicken went to the neighbor's yard and never returned. Nothing left to take care of. He lost even this small benefit.

Now, when Mytrich comes back from the kolkhoz work – his house is empty. The table – also empty. When Anka was here, she used to cook up something. Even if it was a serve of hot potato peelings with some tasty seasoning. Mytrich could fill his belly

with food and go to work in kolkhoz. And now he doesn't have either Anka or potato peelings. And he cannot even wait for any help from his children living in the town. His children are grown up now and they do understand life better than Mytrich. As they say they have to be careful so that people would not notice them. If people find out that they are helping him, they would also become "the enemies of the people."<sup>4</sup> And they would send them in the same place where Anka has been sent. And then, there shall not be any life for them. And for Mytrich, too. All of them will suffer more.

Mytrich had suffered all summer and autumn. He wondered himself how he survived. Winter sneaked up unnoticed. Mytrich was marveling how cold arrived so quickly, snow fell and now there was practically no work in kolkhoz. Thus, more time to be sitting in the cold house and turn over in own mind the heavy thoughts, of course, about Anka. Where is she now? What is happening to her? Perhaps those "murderers" finished her already. Or maybe she died of starvation? There was no place where he could unburden his heart. The only relief to bear the burden – to cry and let the tears to flow.

That's how Mytrich been living in grief. He wasn't looking any more for a bright day. Because he knew that this bright day has nowhere to come from. Because the joy left this earth forever.

Mytrich has been living without hope. Everywhere around him was becoming darker. He couldn't see anything anymore. He was just waiting for his last hours. Not because he was old, not at all, but because he had nothing left in his life. There was nothing left for him to do. His children were far away. And Anka – a woman with whom he had lived in harmony for thirty years – was found to be a "foreign spy." Or, as his children explained to him, she turned to be "the enemy of the people". All that was left for him were his work-days. Even the rooster and the chicken left and did not come back home! In one word, a total solitude had set in. And there was no reason to live anymore... That's why Mytrich was thinking only about death. To die – don't see and don't know anything, and don't hear anyone. He thought it would be easier over there. Maybe he could even meet his Anka.

Although Mytrich wasn't asking God about death, he was not thinking about death by his own hands either. He was just waiting for that death from God himself. He thought God will feel sorry for his unhappiness and his hopeless life, and will take him to heaven.

It is known that God doesn't send sufferings in vain. If a person could overcome severe trial, he will be rewarded for that. Now to Mytrich was sent such trial. Anka was taken away from him. He was left alone. He was not even thrown out of kolkhoz. The chairman of kolkhoz just chuckles around him. And the people stay away from him. Because now everyone became smart. They all are looking at him with sympathy but conversation with him – not a word, God forgive. Only if it was for work matters: "Mytrich go there, ...Mytrich get some things done..." But as it was before – now they never untie their tongues. Is the life today as it used to be in the previous days? Mytrich understands it not less than the others. Even his children, not that they abandoned him but they became more cautious. It is dangerous to show their relative ties. It shouldn't be observed by the strangers that their father has been left alone, that the mother was taken away as a "foreign spy."

Mytrich had been living with his grief until Christmas. On Christmas Eve, when

the Star was up in the village, Mytrich had fallen in front of the old icons in his cold house and began praying in tears. What was he asking God about? What was he telling Him? How did he cry over his misery? Could he remember now? No, he couldn't. He just remembers that there were not enough tears to pour out everything he felt. He remembers that he was not lamenting. He was not complaining about the offenders. He was asking about only one thing. About what? He was not making any special prayers to God, those prayers which he learnt in a village school when the village parson was teaching him, but he was just telling it in his peasant's awkward words. Perhaps those words were clumsy. Maybe they were rough not as one should ask God. But he was asking passionately, from the bottom of his heart.

Mytrich has been praying for a long time. He felt how a great joy was coming his way. An unbelievable joy. Such joy as he never felt in his life. Even when he met up with Anka. He felt wonderful that his soul filled up with such happiness. He felt wonderful because peace and serenity were overwhelming him. And he was more and more passionately thanking Jesus Christ, the newly born Child for His bliss. In his thanksgiving, Mytrich heard Lord's words, which he would never ever tell anyone. And he saw the living Christ in all of His radiance, and this vision he would never forget or tell about it to anyone. Why? Because... How can one talk about such things nowadays?

Suddenly, prostrated in front of the icons, Mytrich hears the snow cracking under the window. Shy steps are coming closer and closer. Knock...knock...Very familiar sound to him! It was such a dear knock at the shutter!

"Oh, it is Anka!" – gasping for breath, Mytrich jumped off the floor, rushed to the door and, without asking who was there, opened it and saw a tiny figure covered in tatter.

– Anka! – he screamed and, having grabbed her around, brought her inside the house...

Yes, it was Anka, his Anka, whom he was asking from Almighty Lord.

He, the Almighty, He, the Christ who was being born, heard Mytrich's prayers and had sent him the greatest joy!

## In Malenkov's Farce Show

*The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR  
Georgy Maximilianovich Malenkov has received today  
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Alexiy.*

*– Posledniye Izvestiya – Radio News, Moscow, December 11, 1954.*

What's it all about?.. How the things turned out today... And they say that in this Esesesera—as the common people call the USSR—the State is separate from the church...

"What? Did you say separate?"

"The Church, we say, is separate from the State, or the State is separate from the Church?.."

"What do you mean separate? The state, so to say, turns over the entire life of the country, and you are talking about 'some kind' of separation! So, you see, there is a sweet reception of Patriarch by the Chairman of the Council of the Ministers—you've heard about it on the radio, haven't you? Did you?"

"Yes, I heard..."

"And you're saying, 'separated'!"

"It's just that we are in some doubt as far as this subject is concerned..."

"You'd better listen apropos of nothing about how that reception was taking place... I could describe it to you all in details, because it's well known, how these receptions proceed. So it happened on December 11 this year. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR paid a visit to the Patriarch. Oh, please excuse me—it's all my old-fashioned way of thinking. I don't know anything about dialectics... It was all the other way round, the Patriarch Alexiy, who, it is mentioned, is not only for all Moscow, but, as it's told in a Soviet fairy-tale, "for all Russia" (and which one—don't know—the godless Soviet?) came for the reception to comrade... To put it short, comrade Patriarch came to comrade Chairman of the Ministers. Well, it's clear, if comrade Patriarch of All Rus did come, as they say, it means he had an important matter. So, therefore, he needed to see comrade Chairman of Ministers. Maybe it was, so to say, an urgent matter.

As the Patriarch is a distinguished person in the Soviet Union, the reception was necessary. A formal reception took place in the Kremlin chambers. It was even in the office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR comrade Malenkov himself.

Thus, they lead comrade Patriarch to comrade Chairman through all the chambers. He is ushered to the office. They help him to sit down; support his pastoral staff, so that unexpectedly it wouldn't make any noise as a result of falling down.

It's well known that in the office there are various portraits—Karl-Marx (excuse my habit of making fun of Karl Marx name) and others like Engels, the last edition of slogans, in anticipation of Christmas, such like, "Religion is opium of the people," "Beat monks and priests, beat the Patriarch..." the last part of this slogan comrade Chairman

of Ministers had carefully wiped away from the wall with his sleeve, so comrade Patriarch wouldn't have chance to read them.

On the walls there're also diagrams showing the "natural mortality of the priests" since the beginning of revolution. Even a blind can see on this diagram that thanks to the efforts of dear Party and wise government this "natural mortality rate" is reduced to zero. And the diagram of "reduction of religious believers" in the population in the USSR, which had a significant increase only in the years of the war, when in order to please "those damned capitalists" they had to allow opening the churches for those irresponsible elements, such as, all kinds of old women, inveterate professors or engineers, as well as other ungrateful population. But at the present moment the numbers of religious believers in the population are maintained on a certain level, so that the foreign representatives can see that the religious life is flourishing in the Esesera!—Forgive my habit of mocking in pronouncing USSR.

It's natural that comrade Patriarch did come with the matters of national importance. And these matters were urgent. A campaign, so to say, was ahead on the All-Union scale—regarding Christmas. So the Patriarch has to find out from the Chairman what delegations will be expected. Where they will be allowed to go in the All-Union space and so on.

By the way, comrade Chairman also had some questions to ask comrade Patriarch. They were also of very significant state importance. So the conversation started between comrade Chairman and comrade Patriarch.

"Well, comrade Patriarch, how are the things going at the religious front?" the Chairman addresses the Patriarch, "Is everything all right?"

"I'd like to discuss a Christmas campaign. I developed a plan. I brought it for your approval," the Patriarch answers.

"Hold on, wait with the plan... How are you doing with foreign priests? How many of them can be counted as the Soviets activists?"

"What's with the priests! They are simplest to deal with! With the laymen—more tougher to handle... You can't take them over so simply because these people happen to be more smarter even if they did not finish any seminary!"

"Get help from MVD—Ministry of Internal Affairs—and MGB—Ministry of State Security!"

"My hands are still too short... It's taking place abroad, not in our happy Esesera!"

"Mobilize the support of your foreign priests to find out supporters of peace or progressive mankind... It should be uneasy for some professors not to be considered as progressive members of the society."

"Money is needed, comrade Chairman, money! Gold is needed to settle this matter! Gold!"

"You say, gold?"

"Only gold. Because they don't accept our Soviet rubles, though they are very long!"

"With the gold we don't have any real difficulties... Because it cost nothing for us to get it... You understand, the camps and others... The elements of a true communism-socialism, so to say, so don't be shy... You have surely studied works by the late Lenin, haven't you? What does he tell about this important matter concerning gold? As Ilyich said, we'll build lavatories from gold in the time of socialism! Got it, comrade Patriarch

Alexiy of Moscow and All Russia?”

“Got it...”

“That’s it about gold. Do you have a cost estimate?”

“It should be without a cost estimate, comrade Chairman... We don’t need publicity, so to say... Because... the money will go abroad... not in a legal way, so to say. We’re catching some big fish here... It doesn’t need publicity, so to say, either... Let’s say, these are members of House of Commons, Labor Party leaders, various members of Congress, and for the struggle against McCarthy... And then we foresee some government members...”

“All right. I’ll tell Zveryev to let you have money in cash... But watch out, if I catch you that you embezzle socialist property, I won’t have mercy on you—you’re aware of the law!”

“Yes, we understand this... We’ll carry out everything exactly. Don’t have any doubt because how many years we’ve been working jointly, how many operations we have executed together—and everything went well, didn’t it?..”

“This we’ll check, because socialism—it means accounting, as the late Ilyich used to say. But you should provide me with statistical data as soon as possible... Figure out how many ministers are registered as active members, how many congressmen, journalists, professors, nuclear experts.... Group them according to their social origin, marital status, age, nationality... You should know yourself how this information must be reported to the ministry...”

“Of course, we’ll do it gladly. It was just yesterday, as we reported such statistics to comrade Minister of the Internal Affairs...”

“And at the most important question at the present dialectical moment – to delay the ratification of Paris and London agreements. Do you understand?”

“Of course, we understand it well, because it is Stalinism...”

“Don’t you dare talking to me about Stalinism. Your Stalinism is dead!”

“Yes, comrade chairman! And what about the Christmas campaign?”

“Leave me your project... I’ll look through it in my spare time... You’ll receive your instructions from MGB. And as for the foreign business, if you succeed, you’ll get the order of Lenin. Do you understand?”

“Of course, I do, comrade Chairman.”

“Well, you may go now. I don’t have anything to discuss with you anymore.”

The Patriarch slowly left the office and headed toward the MVD car waiting for him near the main entrance and returned to his patriarchal residence.

The conversation took place in a warm and friendly atmosphere and in the mutual understanding of the urgent state affairs—such lines could have been published in the deceitful pages of paper “Pravda,” if for this was given an order by the higher authorities...

That is all.



## His Damned Highness

Deep under the earth, where no living being has ever been, there is a gloomy kingdom of the Lord of Evil – His Damned Highness the Satan.

Eternal darkness reigns there, and because of it the underworld seems boundless. Its labyrinth of the narrow and dark passages, snake-like halls, huge caves and almost unnoticeable holes, never saw the light of day—neither the sun, nor the moon, nor delicate shimmering of the stars that adorn dark earthly nights. This underground lives its own life that is incomprehensible to any human. Not all people know about this life, not everyone wants to believe in this dreadful life.

Colossal columns, embellished with precious stones, with gold and silver, support high ceilings. Their polished surface reflects the hungry tongues of fire, from the blazing springs, that lazily lick toward the underground's ceiling. If it were not for these springs of flames scattered here and there around the whole underworld, there would be eternal darkness here, the eternal gloom. But the internal fire of the Earth burst up from the deep cracks, forming in some places lakes of fire. The flames of these springs paint everything in red and in this way present an even grimmer and more terrifying sight to all.

In the hollow of the big cave stands a throne created from human bones and its back is built from skeletons. The skulls of the skeletons face an extensive chamber. They look out with the dark spots of their eyes, noses, and uneven rows of teeth... The flickering tongues of flame play with the red shimmers on the withered bones, and then it seems that the skeletons are laughing... Yes, they laugh... A terrifying laugh, a wild laugh. A mad laugh. But an infectious one. And one of the heaviest punishments of His Damned Highness imposed by Him on His subjects is getting infected with this mad laugh of the silent skeletons of His throne.

The victim stands in front of the throne. For some time he looks at the red laughing skulls quietly, intensely, and then suddenly madness starts burning in his eyes and the red darkness of the underground resounds with the horrifying roaring roll,

“Ahh-kha-kha-kha!.. Go-go-go-go!.. Oo-oo-oo-oo-oo!.. Ghou-ou-ou-ou!.. Oolyu-lyu-lyu-lyu!.. Hi-i-i-oo-oo-a-a-a-o-o-o-e-e-e-u-u-u... Kha-kha-kho-kho-kho-fiyu-yu-yu!..”

The diabolical laugh spreads through the whole bloody-red underworld, and it is heard with equal strength everywhere, and everywhere it makes the same impression—the deadly horror of the sinners becomes even deeper, and the fear of the devils before His Damned Highness brings them into a state of the same madness that their punished brother is experiencing, and the underworld resounds with agonizing groans and mad laughter...

The tongues of the fire springs tremble, and with them red figures and their shadows tremble, too. Finally, the darkness itself shakes from the burst of the Homeric laughter of His Damned Highness the Satan, and the fire licks at the precious stones of the columns, their silver and gold, reaching the high ceilings of the underworld...

There is no time here. Space is infinite. Inhabitants of the dark underworld can

freely get anywhere they want. Through the pores they penetrate the Earth surface, run high over the Earth, reaching other Worlds... Maybe, they have their own diabolical time that is not counted in human years, this we don't know, but still the old age with all of its negative attributes manifests itself as strong as it does on the Earth, with the people...

Finally this terrible time came for His Damned Highness, too. He started feeling fatigue all over His damned body. He got tired of sitting on His throne. He felt the desire to go around this entire domain. But He did not have the strength to do so. He became irritated, stubborn and even crueler, not only to the sinners but also to his double-horned subjects. Groans and mad laughter now never stopped. The red tongues of the fire springs would seize the sinners, around whom the devils fussed with their instruments of torture trying to please His Damned Highness...

Grinding of the teeth, crashing of the breaking human bones, beating of the drums covered with human skin, now mixed with the mad laughter of the guilty devils that were not able to fulfill all the whims of their high patron. Satan was cranky, his wishes changed so quickly that no one could ever please him...

The World secretly harbored the dream about Goodness, Happiness, and Love—His Damned Highness lives out His last days... And the male and female devils, in the meantime twirled in a mad dance to the music of the groans of tortured sinners; male and female devils devoured flames of the fire springs and their eyes beamed hot red rays... They all wanted to cheer the Mighty Lord of Evil...

At the throne of His Damned Highness the wisest old devils, led by the court Physician, bent down...

"Evil is coming to the end..." in a weakening voice complained Satan, "I feel... I live out my last years... I don't have any strength left... I am getting weaker... I am losing the power over the World... And there won't be anyone to support Evil on Earth... My devil-brothers will sprawl across the whole World... They will scatter across the Universe... What will they be able to do to people without me?... Nothing. They are powerless against people's Goodness..."

The Esteemed Assembly followed every word, every sigh of their Master, the Esteemed Assembly searched for the ways of saving His Damned Highness, and in the hidden crypt of this diabolical wisdom was being conceived the Truth of Evil that could save Satan from death...

The court Physician stood up. With his head hanging down, he approached His Damned Highness. He touched the flaming gown of his Master with his tail and, gathering himself up to his full devil's height, he started talking in a rough metallic voice:

"The Greatest of the Greatest, the Wisest of the Wisest, the Mightiest of the Mightiest! Your Damned Highness! The most Evil Overlord of the Universe! The most Fearful Master, Who makes all that is alive tremble with trepidation! Evil is infinite, just as is its Creator! Where are the limits of Crime, Stupidity, Stinginess, Deception, of all human weaknesses that lead to the sin? There are no such limits, Your Damned Highness! We cannot allow for our Mightiest Lord to disappear! Our Esteemed Assembly of the devils' sages came to the conclusion that the only way of maintaining the life in Your Most Precious organism is to reinforce it with the blood of innocent people. This makes me, the Court Physician of Your Damned Highness, to approach the Flaming Gown of my most Fearful Master, to touch it with my tail as a sign of the deepest respect and devotion to Your Damned Highness and, disturbing Your peace,

ask You to give order to all the devils, male and female, to stop chasing the sinners that would be able to get to Your richest domain on their own, and switch to the search of the innocent, so that their blood would restore Your health, which is so needed to the whole Universe!"

Keeping with the order of the ceremony, after the court Physician, the Wisest Advisor approached His Damned Highness and started his speech in a sepulchral voice, "Your Damned Highness! The Mighty Lord of Evil! The Master of Darkness! Our Esteemed Assembly considered in detail all the circumstances related to the capture of innocent people... We are kneeling down before His Damned Highness and feeling it necessary to ask You, the Wisest of the wisest, to exchange all benevolent and wise rulers of the earth with the most stupid and angry, and Your Most Fearful Rule will be revived in an even stronger form than it ever had been before!

After that the Court Physician and the Wisest Advisor got the Flaming Gown on their horns and kissed the decrepit cold leg of their Lord.

His Damned Highness demanded, only with His eyes, the approach to Him of the wisest and the oldest devil, who managed the affairs on the Earth.

"Destroy the kind monarchs of the Earth... Kill the wise rulers... Send to the Earth revolutions, ...hunger, ...disease... Establish the leaders of the peoples who are criminals or fools... I need the blood of innocent people for my own life... Let thousands of my most loyal devils, male and female, infiltrate people's crowds, let them search for the innocent, the sinless... I will draw strength from their lives to produce Evil in the future!..

And the wisest devils carried out the order of their Lord.

And the wicked and stupid rulers set in on the Earth, they were evil and ruthless, and they started betraying their innocent brothers through folly or evil...

And His Damned Highness is still sitting on the throne made of human bones, greedily pounces on the new innocent victims, like a vampire he leeches from their bodies, the bodies that are still warm, sucking their sinless blood...

And Satan's powers grow stronger...

His Damned Highness affirmed Evil and Hatred, Stupidity and Ignorance even to a higher degree than they existed before on our sinful Earth...

---

Phew! What an abominable but true-to-life dream it was!

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And a small man, an earthly worm, asks, "Will there be an end to the greatest modern Evil on our planet?"

And the human mind comes to the answer, "There should be an end to God's patience!"

"God is with us!"

# The Enemies of the People

State secret police watchdods relentlessly search for the suspected “enemies of the people” and send millions without trial to prisons and gulags to suffer and die from forced labor, cold, hunger and disease.

*Dedicated to the memory of millions  
who suffered and lived without freedom  
and those who perished  
at the bloody hands of state secret police.*

## Prologue – My Sweet Friend

We returned from work together.  
It was winter, there was snow, it was a Saturday.  
Slowly we walked, as we trudged curb to curb;  
Gray avenues drifted by us,  
Silvery stars shone above in the sky.  
We did not hurry as though awaiting something.  
By midnight the town was deserted,  
Silenced, its mood concealed,  
Scarcely a single happy dream was dreamed.  
Only we did not sleep, we kept vigil for a while,  
Because – to the right was Partkom<sup>1</sup> and to the left – CheKa.<sup>2</sup>  
Eventually, of course, we arrived at our homes,  
We lay in our beds, but sleep will not come:  
Pondering the past; thoughts of the day, of work,  
And in our dreams – towards freedom we strive.  
The night is noiseless but not tranquil, troubled,  
Because in the world that we live all is false.  
We're accustomed to sleep with watchful eyes,  
Even to our kin we don't dare say the words;  
Instead we utter speeches, oaths, incantations,  
Hiding our trembling we report for a date with a Chekist...<sup>3</sup>  
The night is noiseless, but a thousand ears strain until day,  
As night passes by, the world prepares to shout "Hurray!"  
In an alley somewhere an auto lets out a sudden roar –  
My sweet friend hides in the shadows, and becomes numb:  
"We must hasten with speed from the town!"  
But to where? It's easy to think of, but pray tell how!  
"Against the background of snow we'll be easily seen,  
And if they suddenly catch us, what shall we say?"  
We shall run together into the dark of the woods,  
But I'm not a killer, friend – not a thief!  
Imperceptibly shall we make our way to the far off forest;  
Maybe, to find there a Makhno's<sup>4</sup> sawn-off rifle,  
Or shall we lose our footsteps in the thick of the steppe?  
We're the "enemies", but truly, can it be only us?  
What is this present rule to my sweet friend?  
He had endured it to his heart's content!"  
He himself is from a village, from peasants,  
Not a *kulak*,<sup>5</sup> nor *serednyak*<sup>6</sup> but one of the poor,  
And still now his sister and father together starve

Out there, in the collective farm for a workday crumbs!  
For a long time they attached to him a label  
For his chary words and sharp tongue.  
And so now he is wandering here, my sweet friend,  
Running somewhere—will he have been caught?  
He's a "contra," "corrupt intellectual" –  
The heart quivers, freezes for a moment,  
A wave of cold terror passes through,  
But on the face there's an air of unconcern.  
At the edge of a cemetery with a masquerade of graves  
My friend whispers, "Surely this is hell!"  
The executioners didn't recognize, they only guessed,  
They unsheathed sharp swords at the half-dead man—  
And forever disappeared my sweet friend...  
But for sure, he was a man with a big heart!..

## Proletarian Justice

The enormous hall of the railroad club was crammed full of people, and not just because it was the first day of the open judicial trial, but also because sitting in the docks was Grisha Pechenyegin – a cheerful baggage weigh man, who loved life, and whom everyone knew and loved for his kindness, his wittiness, and his willingness to help anyone who needed it.

The benches were breaking under the strain of excess of sitting people; the corridors were overflowing with those who hadn't been able to reach an empty space in time on the two long rows of simple wooden benches. The people there were laborers and employees; tired and hungry, with sticky, perspiring faces. The air was stuffy, it was difficult to breathe, but even in the unnatural silence everyone was straining their ears, their eyes; all their attention in order to guess the meaning behind the mysterious words, "Workers' and Peasants' Justice."

The hollow enclave in front of the stage meant for the orchestra, and surrounded by a barrier, was covered with planks of wood. On top of the planks stood a long bench where a few defendants had been placed. On the stage – a long table covered with a thin red cloth; to the left – a small table for the prosecutor; to the right – another one for the defense.

The Judge, a former shunting-engine fireman, Maltsev, who had been a *chekist*<sup>1</sup> in the early years of the revolution, was promoted to a position of responsibility by the Communist Party, was dry, dull and bitter. His distorted green eyes bore into his interlocutors and fill them with a sepulchral coldness. His whole outfit was made from fine, expensive leather; boots were shined; and gleaming on his leather cap was a red enamel star. He had a harsh, rasping voice; there was no smoothness in his speech – sometimes it took great difficulty to even catch what he said.

Maltsev conducted cross-examination clumsily and chaotically. He frequently went into unnecessary detail, sometimes even answering his own questions himself without allowing the defendant any time to answer.

The prosecutor, comrade Kolomiyets, the former station porter, was a big, corpulent man with a puffy face, a long black bushy moustache and a fleshy, bulbous nose. He looked out at the surrounding him world with the eyes full of envy, and even here, with the victim's fate in his hands, he would look at the accused with the same glare, as if to say, "Look, they love you even now... and what about me?.."

Kolomiyets spoke slowly and not altogether coherently, while swaying his enormous torso, often slapping himself on his hugely protruding belly. Probably he imagined that in the person of the accused he was smashing the capitalists, because in his speech there was not a single word about the guilt of Pechenyegin. Instead words such as "bourgeois," "capitalist," "white guard" etc. tumbled from his lips. After smashing the capitalists, he never forgot to demand the capital punishment for all "criminals."

After finishing the two-year railroad school in the first year of the revolution,



Kondratyev, the Council for the Defense, before becoming a barrister was a station clerk. Revolution had advanced him a long way in the forming of a new society and he became enamored with his new profession, though he possessed not a shred of talent for it.

He was tall, withered, with a flat, bony, feminine face that was flushed all over and had transparent, gray expressionless eyes. He spoke with a burr in a guttural monotone, often making reference to “the proletarian conscience of the citizens of the court.”

At last it was time for the final words of the accused. Each one of the accused defended himself as best he could. Grigory Timofeyevich Pechenyegin spoke last:

“Citizens of the court! Yes, I am guilty. I committed a crime. Twice I profited from the baggage car in a profiting manner. It has been proven by the inquest and I am not denying it here, now, in this courtroom. The first time, I dispatched a pood (36 pounds) of salt to N., in exchange for which I received a pood of rye flour in return. The second time, I dispatched another a pood of salt but that time I didn’t receive any flour in return because, as the citizen prosecutor expressed, a band of the capitalists been uncovered.”

Pechenyegin, exhausted by his incarceration and the interrogations, had by now become convinced of his own guilt, though the truth was that none of the defendants were guilty of anything. At that time every railroad worker was entitled to free carriage of baggage for up to two poods. Special “provision” tickets existed for railroad workers in remote stations far from the station towns, which allowed them to travel to the closest towns in order to acquire provisions.

The main objective of the trial should have been to charge Pechenyegin in speculation, but, on one side, they couldn’t establish this because the flour received by Pechenyegin in exchange for the salt was used by his family. On the other side, the new law was not clearly understood by the “jurists” conducting the trial. But the government demanded to round up and severely punish the criminal-profiteers. Pechenyegin had fallen victim of the demand of the “higher government bodies” and to a courtroom full of illiterates.

“Why did I decide to commit this crime?” he continued. “The court is aware that I earned 11,000 rubles a month and that bread at the market cost 14,000 rubles. The court knows that I have a family: a wife, a one-year-old son and a mother-in-law. No one except me gets the bread, because the dependants don’t have bread ration card. That quarter of a pound of barley bread that I was taking home we divided equally – even my little son received the hard crust to bite his growing teeth on.

“From the railroad cooperative I received just four pounds of millet, a quarter pound of sugar and a quarter pound of oil each month. Tell me, could I have fed a family on those rations? Could I have looked at my starving son with indifference? Could I have ignored my wife’s despair? And finally, I could not have thrown an old lady, my wife’s mother, out onto the street!?”

Pechenyegin stopped, closed his eyes and sighed heavily:

“It was not a desire to profit; to get wealthy; or any ‘bourgeois temptations’ that pushed me to commit this crime. Nor a desire to become a ‘capitalist shark’ or to lead ‘counter-revolutionary activities to overthrow Soviet rule’—no, I just wanted to alleviate the hunger of those who are close and dear to me, to whom I am a husband, a father, and a provider. Feeding my family was my duty. I couldn’t find any other way of doing it,

so I committed this crime. I only hope that the court will take into consideration all the reasons that impelled me to commit this unlawful act, and that it will pass a fair sentence."

The court left for deliberation. Everyone in the hall remained motionless and silent as they waited with bated breath for the "fair sentence" to be announced, knowing well that no crime had taken place. But they felt a sense of foreboding that an awful decision was about to be announced by Maltsev, the unhappy shunting-engine fireman, a brutal chekist and a cruel judge.

A shrill voice cut through the ominous silence:

"All rise, the members of the court are returning."

During the time that the characters of this drama played on the stage were taking their places, hundreds of people fixed their eyes on the judge's shaved, cold, dried-up physiognomy. Everyone wanted to guess what words would he read out, this little mean man whose life went by observed by everybody, unsuccessful life, useless life, life of a man devoid of any talent, who was envious and perpetually drunk.

Maltsev had managed to learn the first part of the sentencing by heart and he spoke without hesitating. But further along, not being able to read at all well, he began to stumble and became confused and finally he set the paper aside and began repeating, in his own words, the words that were spoken by the prosecutor. He cursed the bourgeoisie, threatened with a world-wide revolution, with the extermination of the "predatory sharks" and he intended to crush the "counter-revolutionary hydras". However his gift of eloquence quickly dried out and, looking proudly around at all the people who had gathered here, he wearily lowered himself onto his chair.

The court secretary, who had jumped in surprise when the sentencing began to be read out, and watching now that the judge had sat down before announcing the decision of the court, was telling him in a low voice:

"Comrade Maltsev, comrade Maltsev, and the verdict... read out the verdict... that has been conferred on the accused..."

Maltsev was not embarrassed. He got up, took the sheet of paper covered in writing, and began to slowly announce who would be sent to prison and for how many years. When he got to Pechenyegin he set aside the paper again, evidently because he had remembered what was written, and then, looking directly at his victim, he pronounced:

"And the main criminal Pechenyegin – to be shot!"

The hall froze. It seemed like the breath of a hundred people halted in that one moment. It was as though a tiny spark could blow up the huge building and wipe out the cruel verdict off the face of the earth, along with the farce of a court and its pitiable, malevolent members. But there was no spark. The people were silent.

The prisoners were taken out.

Tonya, Pechenyegin's wife, was taken out too. The starving mother was taken to her starving child.

The world is not without kind people. They showed much kindness, warmed and fed her. The pain was so intense that Tonya could think of nothing else. But someone came; someone looked after them, fed her child and her; someone took care of the home and helped her old sick and broken mother to put things in order; someone didn't forget her during these terrible days.

Day and night large tears fell from her big black eyes. She imagined the scene of the execution... the shot... and she would lose consciousness... And then, the same scene would come back...

Some days passed. A sunny morning found Tonya in a state of drowsiness, but just as soon as the bright rays touched her eyelids she opened her swollen eyes, reddened by tears, and caught sight of her son sitting up at that early hour in his little bed. As he saw his mother, he smiled and pulled himself towards her. Tonya stood up and scrutinizing her son's smile she cried:

"You are Grigory, my Victor!"

In the smile of her son she recognized that gentle warm glance that Grigory would often give her. She pulled her son close, hugged him, kissed him and spoke to him lovingly...

The meaning of life was here in her hands. Although her tears continued to flow, she tried to hide them now. Although the wound of her pain caused her incredible torment, Tonya was soothing it with her only consolation – her son.

A friend in need is a friend indeed. One day an errand boy arrived from the telegraph office:

"Comrade Pechenyegina, Pyotr Makarovich is asking for you... that about work..."

Tonya went to the telegraph office. Any way she needed to search for work someplace. The chief was an elderly man who knew all the young railroaders.

"Well Tonya," he said, "Grief is a sorrow, misfortune is trouble, but one must live?"

"Of course, Pyotr Makarovich..."

"Telegraph courses are starting. In three months you could be a telegrapher but the provision's card you'd receive right away."

"Well, and how about all those partcoms<sup>2</sup> and profcoms?<sup>3</sup>"

"That I'll deal with them; now, fill out this application form..."

Tonya filled out the form. Feeling encouraged by the old railman, she left with happy thoughts and in hope.

Of course, the old telegrapher had to fight at the *partcom* and *profcom*, but he managed to defend Pechenyegin: "Should they die of hunger? And she herself is not guilty of anything."

Within three months Tonya was already working and bringing home not only rations, but also a small amount of money that gradually began to gain some worth. Her work forced her to forget her grief and, although she remembered her husband every day, the sharpness of the emotional pain began to lessen.

Seven years passed. Autumn was approaching. Viktor had already started school. As before, Tonya went on duty, rested and took care of her son. She often thought about Grigory, not only because her son looked like him, but because she knew that those happy times in her life would never return, ever—that evil borne of incredible malice had dealt with a person close to her, to whom she had devoted her whole life.

It was true that a while ago assistant station master, Korolyev, had looked at her tenderly, spoke beautiful words to her, accompanied her home after work and then, not so long ago had declared his love and asked her to be his wife. Tonya first thought about Viktor then told him that if he was willing to be the father of her son, then she would agree.

"But think carefully about it, because before all else I am a mother."

Korolyev was mature, optimistic, good and sensitive. He'd known Tonya for a long time. He knew of her terrible loss and understood that life had cruelly mocked her youth, shattering all of the young woman's happiness. He understood clearly that she now not only needed a friend, whose shoulder she could lean on during the hard times (and by God, how many of these there are!), but also a father for her son. A father who could warm with his love a delicate heart; who could pour into his heart all the good that the world firmly established as absolute truth – virtue, Christian love for his fellow man and the knowledge of God in His greatness and glory.

Korolyev was religious, and was still governed by his faith. Without any doubt or hesitation he told Tonya:

"Your son will be my son. I know that my love for him is as sincere as my love for you. If the Lord helps us in building our life together, your son will never have to call me 'stepfather'."

His truthfulness was clear to Tonya. She breathed a sigh of relief. She had found a person with whom she could share her loneliness.

Korolyev would now call in to see Tonya more frequently. He was becoming close to his future son; he talked with her about the forthcoming wedding that was set to take place in the mid-autumn. There wasn't a lot to arrange, but there wasn't much time either.

One rainy autumn evening Tonya was sitting alone in her room awaiting Korolyev. Her son had gone out with his grandmother to visit a neighbor to look at the new toys received as birthday presents by a Viktor's friend, who walked with him to school. It was around eight o'clock at night when she heard a cautious knock at the door. Tonya startled, sure that it was not Korolyev who was knocking – he could only come after eight. She opened the door. A man dressed in a long, black, dirty, tattered and full of holes overcoat stood before her with a solemn face.

"I need to see Antonina Ivanovna Pechenyegina", he said.

"I am she... come in," uttered Tonya guardedly.

The man entered the room, shut the door firmly, looked around him and, satisfied that there was no one in the room, began to talk:

"Your husband, Grigory Timofeyevich Pechenyegin is alive... he sends greetings to you and your son Viktor, from the far North... He asked..."

Someone struck the door. From behind the stranger's dirty overcoat emerged Viktor, and behind him entered his grandmother. The strange man turned around sharply and disappeared, shutting the door behind him, firmly as before.

Tonya was benumbed. She didn't see her son or her mother. She rushed towards the doors and darted out onto the street. The cold wind and rain poured onto her flushed head. The impenetrable darkness of autumn concealed the mysterious man who had brought the news about Grigory... "Where was he now that thin, emaciated man, where had he gone?" she thought. Amidst the darkness of the approaching night, her eyes tried in vain to discern his figure as she remembered it. It was of no use trying to hear his footsteps through the sound of the wind and rain.

Her wound reappeared. The pain of those first days when she lost her husband engulfed her now. Huge, hot tears flowed in an incessant stream from her eyes. Her heart bled; her anxious mind repeated over and over again, "He's alive! He's alive!"

Korolyev found Tonya in bed. He approached her and took her cold hand in his.

“What’s wrong, Tonya?”

“It is all over... my sweet friend... I can’t be your wife...”

“What happened? Why?”

“My husband, the father of my son is alive... we belong to him...”

## For Bread Alone

They gathered in quiet dead end streets, behind small shops or behind large stores where there was no single soul. They were gathering after a day of work, before dusk, when young people poured out to breathe in some fresh air, to be distracted from a half-starved workday. They would mix in with the strollers, so that no one would recognize them. They set themselves up for a long, sleepless, tiring night, to standing in stressful waiting. And now they were walking along with the carefree youth, always alive, always joyful, not causing any suspicion. The city has been for a long time left to the mercy of fate—live however you want, but don't rebel and give all of your strength to us, your rulers!

To the right of the cathedral, converted into a movie theater, like an oasis in the desert, on an empty square, youth appears party-colored in dirty-red dresses of the same style among gray, boring and sad selection of blouses and belted trousers. There are couples walking the sidewalk—young men and women—but mostly there are women, both young and elderly, even very old women, keeping aside from the youth. Once in a while one would see men, mostly, old ones. They all are walking as if it was a day of rest.

The darkness is settling in, empties the square, from which, crossing the square with small, unsuspecting steps, women, young women, girls and occasional man, go hiding between two-story stores and get completely lost in a small, narrow alley formed by three old shops.

No one even thinks to form a straight line right away. They run into the alley, as if for some urgent need, "Who is the last one?" soft voice would be heard in the darkness, and a careful voice would reply promptly, "You are going to be number Eighty Nine..."—and a shadow that just arrived will move deeper into the alley, awaiting the next one, and then some would disappear behind the corner.

The militiamen are walking by the storefronts, once in a while they enter the market, but they always avoid going into the alleys.

The city slowly becomes quiet. It is third show time now at the movie theater, but around it was becoming so empty, that it seemed as if everything has gone extinct. And during this almost midnight hour, the mysterious shadows started moving around in the dark alleys, hiding in poorly lit places on the sidewalks, streaming to a highly desired alley.

"Number Five?... Where is Number Five?" a quiet voice was heard.

"Here... I am fifth..."

"Hundred and twelfth?... Hundred and twelfth?" bursts in a new, rustling voice.

"Here... Behind me..."

Bread! People have lost everything. There isn't too much humanity left in them. Among what's still left is honesty. In the middle of midnight quietness, everyone was observing strict order. Rarely would someone trick the darkness and cut the line!

Toward midnight, the snake-like line was completely formed. The out-of-the-way, narrow alley squeezed everyone, so that there wasn't even a place to thread the needle!

One to one, as if they grew into one body, tightly adjoined to each other and holding with a tight grip, they were waiting... It seemed as if one heart was beating, one pair of lungs was breathing, one pair of eyes was looking into the darkness, one blood was streaming starting with the first one to the very last one, with but one fervent wish—bread!

Once in a while were heard the loud footsteps of militiamen, walking along the sidewalk, and in the alley, the line like a multi-headed, multi-footed, multi-armed, both-gendered creature, intensely listened to the confident, masterful footsteps, and it seems as if, at those minutes one very large heart was beating very loudly “tock-tock,” “tock-tock”—and this whole common body was trembling, burning, waiting, when at last, those sharp, distinct footstep sounds would disappear. As if one chest, the breath of relief was expelled, “U-u-kh-kh-kh!.. He walked by!..

People have lost everything. There isn’t too much humanity left in them. Among the little of what’s still left is honesty. Oh, how beautiful, how touching is this honesty in a dark, quiet alley!

Wearisome summer night. Oh, no, it is not as short a night as it seemed some time ago to poets and writers of the pre-revolutionary Russia! This one lasts very long! One has to remain standing! One has to endure it! One has to suffer through all of its discomforts! And it is not the darkness that hides the shame—it is bread.... “Uncle, I’m just for a moment...” whispers a girl’s voice, and barely noticeable like a shadow, gets out from the line, takes two or three steps away to relieve her “need” and rushes back to her place, so as not to lose the right to her piece of “daily bread...”

The line is quiet. It breathes heavily with one heavy breath, lives with one wish—to fetch a piece of bread!

It is sunrise now. Fatigued, ill-looking faces are developing as if on photographic paper, and they go a little further to take care of their “need.” Shame? It’s a prejudice of bourgeoisie!

Five minutes until seven now. They are running out of the alley, still observing the previous formation of the line. A militiaman is by the store door. And right by him there is already the beginning of the new line. No one is brave enough to say a word, and the first one from the night-long line becomes here the tenth or the twentieth, because in front of him now are the friends, relatives, acquaintances or simply neighbors of the militiaman. The guardsman of the disorder with pleased smile leaves his spot of duty.

Eight o’clock now. The first dozen in line break into the opening doors. Instead of the militiaman, it is the store manager at the doors—Cerberus without the chain. The sales women leisurely slowly start their workday. They cut out the coupons out of the provision cards, write the orders for the cashbox, and a customer is running to pay for it. Now, there is a line at the cashier’s stand—there is no small change for the bills...

Sometimes those waiting to get the change, had to let two or three-dozen people go by, and, finally, they get their change and rush to the bread counter.

“Did I tear off the coupons from the card for you?”

“Yes, you wrote the order for the cashbox for me!”

The sales woman thinks for long time, while the customers wait patiently—the Cerberus at the door is without a chain. And the saleswomen here are not ordinary—they are bread-feed! They are almost militiamen.

At last, finally!.. Oh, Lord! Bread, crumpled still at the bread factory, is crumpled one final time when the customer is trying to squeeze through the door where the crowd

is rushing inside the store...This tortured bread is in their hands...

And still ahead, there is another night like this in some other alley!

That's where they will be "giving"—Ladies Shoes... Stockings... Rubber boots...  
Men's Suits...

And once again—bread, bread, bread...

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Oh, what a pity, that here, in the Western world, these hippies with long hair and along with them the rotten spoiled professors, liberals, democrats, radicals, senators, ministers, preachers, who can only criticize and promise; what a pity, that this entire elite of disgraceful crowd did not end up in the quiet alley of a provincial Soviet town and did not personally experience on their own hardened hide all the "beauty" of that "bright" future, for which they are so zealously fighting!



## It Happened at a Showing of “Battleship Potyemkin”

Not long ago on the television screen of an “educational” program they were showing, as our Americans say, a “classic film”—“Battleship Potyemkin.”

My goal is not to rate the “classicality” of this Soviet cultural production—émigrés are able to do this without help from the sidelines. What I want to do is to recount about a fact that took place many years ago at a showing of the film “Battleship Potyemkin.”

While escaping from Soviet authorities from the city to the village, in the mid-nineteen-hundred-and-twenties I found myself in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka, eight and a half kilometers from Khartsyzsk station.

The beginnings of a cultural life in the village had been laid long before the revolution by the intelligentsia that lived there during those times. The village was melded with the mine and the peasants lived a half-worker’s, half-peasant’s life. For that reason emerged a culture that was not purely village, but not urban either. During the Soviet period began the transformation of this culture to the new Communist way.

The mine was destroyed during the civil war. Also destroyed were the majority of the small houses where the miners lived, but those that remained intact, were occupied by some inhabitants. One large house was converted into a collective farm clubhouse, and another soon thereafter was made into a school.

Shows were put on in the clubhouse, concerts were staged by the local efforts, some artists would come by. The plays were from the old repertoire, from time to time there were Soviet propaganda pieces, and at the concerts invariably was performed the “Internationale”. Very rarely a worker from the district’s cultural department would visit the village bringing along a traveling movie. Then the entire village would show up to watch the motion pictures. This was still an enormous rarity.

In the year 1926 or 1927 on the village screen there appeared the silent motion picture “Battleship Potyemkin”. At the start of the showing the hall was packed tight with young and old. On the first bench there sat an elderly peasant woman with two sons. One was already a Komsomol<sup>1</sup> member, while the other was a Pioneer<sup>2</sup> and a pupil at the village school.

After long fiddling with and adjusting, the little movie projector began to work, on the screen people began moving. In the hall fell a deep, living silence in which at times a muffled cough or nearby deep sigh was heard; the little projector did crackle dryly, but no one noticed a thing for the attention of the entire hall was focused on the screen.

The majority accepted the picture for some sort of documentary film, and the comrade propagandist, of course, did not dissuade anyone.

Then suddenly the silence that had achieved an unusual tension was broken by a hysterical woman’s cry, “Vasyl’ko!<sup>3</sup> My Vasyl’ko!” The excited woman sitting with her two sons in front jumped up screaming in Ukrainian, “My husband!” Enthused by new images she ran to the barrier, beyond which in the interludes an orchestra played during the shows, and started wailing, “Vasyl’ko!! My husband! Why did you leave us!” Her exclamations heightened the attention of the audience since many knew her husband.

When the showing was finished, her sons hastened to lead their upset mother home. The audience that was exiting the hall had stopped right there on the square before the clubhouse and reasoned in their peasant's Ukrainian dialect, was that Vasyl'ko Zhuravlyev or someone else?

"Well then, who doesn't know Vasyl Zhuravlev? It is clear—it's him!"

"You, muzhiks, have your eyes fallen out! What Vasyl was that? As soon as the old stupid woman whooped, you suddenly start spotting Vasyl! You are queer fish, and not people!"

"Well, what are you yelping? If you didn't see, then you better shut up! Maybe someone doubts, but I've known him better than anyone else, because he was my neighbor! And I recognized him in the picture, same as woman Zhuravlyeva did!"

In the darkness sparkled the red flashes of cigarettes and the smell of makhorka detected in the lazy breeze of approaching night. Slowly muzhiks drifted apart and their voices already carried from afar were barely audible, though one word was repeated everywhere, "Vasyl'ko." The picture was forgotten. The hot topic of several days was the "hero" from the "Battleship Potyemkin", the sailor Vasyl Zhuravlyev, who was exiled to banishment by the Tsar along with other rebellious sailors.<sup>4</sup>

I heard the history of woman Zhuravlyeva the following day.

She lived on the edge of the village, not far from the ruined mine, in her own hut. After her husband's exile Zhuravlyeva traveled to see him in the distant Siberia almost yearly, lived there for some time, then would return home and at the established time brought to God's world a baby. The majority of her babies died young when they were left to the care of others during her trips to her husband. Only three now remained—two sons and a daughter; who lived with her.

The whole village knew where Zhuravlyeva went and no one was surprised that the poor peasant woman during that "cursed Tsarist days" made such a distant trip to her husband, a state condemned criminal, and that the authorities did not put any obstacles not only to her meeting with the convict, but living with him in the same hut and, upon returning, not dying of hunger.

## The Sleep-walker

I used to know a tailor. Kiril Petrovich. He was a solid, reliable sort of person. He had a family: a quiet, calm wife. He always had plenty of work. In short, their earnings were good, in one word – live and don't get yet ready to die. Then one day Kiril Petrovich became sick. Peculiarly sick.

Just after everyone had settled to sleep for the night, he rose from his bed in the darkness and, extending his arms out in front of him, he groped his way through the rooms and out the front door. He stole unnoticed through the courtyard and out of the gate. Then he clambered up an enormous tree that stood opposite his house and stayed there until daybreak. No sooner had the sun appeared than he returned home, lay down on his bed, and slept until the appropriate hour. By day, of course, he worked.

Each morning he related all the details of the night to his wife:

"Last night Vanyusha declared his love to Manyusha right under my tree. It will be an autumn wedding, no doubt..."

"Comrade Kolody sprang out of comrade Yevdokimova's window at around four o'clock this morning wearing just underwear and comrade Yevdokimova's wife threw all his clothes out into the passageway after him..."

"A lone drunken laborer arrived. He repudiated our precious Soviet system over the whole street..."

"A car passed by...they seized Sergey Vasilyevich..."

In this way Kiril Petrovich would sometimes report sensational news that had not been printed in even a single newspaper.

One day while the tailor was sitting in his tree his thoughts turned to the tree's densely-leafed crown, and he pondered the hustle and bustle that went on down below on the ground as he listened to the silence of the slumbering town. All of a sudden he heard the sound of an engine. He cautiously drew aside the branches and peered out. Indeed, there was a car speeding along with its headlights flashing, heading directly towards his house. It halted. Two fellows jumped out and went straight into his house.

Kiril Petrovich froze. He was frightened in case he should cough or sneeze. In one word, he stopped breathing. It was clear to him that those two fellows were throwing their weight about in his home.

After some time had passed the two men dashed out, hurled some big words towards his house, sat in their car and sped off.

The next morning his wife told him:

"They were..."

"I know... and... what about?"

"They wanted to know where you are. 'I don't know where he vanishes to at night,' I told them. 'For the past three months he hasn't spent a single night at home... Perhaps he's ill and hasn't told me...' Then they cursed and left—but they promised to visit again. 'We', they said, 'need to remove the entire old bourgeoisie!'"

Kiril Petrovich continued to sleep-walk right up till the autumn. And then his

illness stopped out of the blue; vanished—as if by magic. He would go to sleep in his bed in the evening and wouldn't wake up again until the following morning.

Those two fellows, by the way, changed their targets. The old bourgeoisie was forgotten about, and they began rounding up all the saboteurs and dissenters. And they still only did such kind of thing at night. Perhaps that was on government orders, and then again, perhaps they were ashamed to seize innocent people in broad daylight.

And I don't know why Kiril Petrovich's sickness occurred, for I'm not a doctor.

## Captain Rakitin

Rakitin, a bookkeeper of the Soviet State Bank, had never concealed his past. How could he, if right before the revolution he returned home from the front and hobbled on the crutches around the native town wearing his military uniform with captain's shoulder straps. Everyone knew him; it made no sense to make up a new biography to hide his military past.

The revolution, of course, made striking effect on him. He put on his old civilian suit and, after his wound on the leg had healed, still limping, he continued to walk around the town, taking a good look at the newly established revolutionary order.

When the comrades soldiers in the local garrison, took the law in their own hands to deal with the gentlemen officers, he pondered over the fate of his motherland, weighed up the strength of the Lenin's "masses" and came to the conclusion that one cannot chop wood with the pen knife. He did not join any anti-Bolshevik armies, as his injured and shortened leg put him out of formation.

Had gone by numerous power authorities, passed by many front lines, and the peaceful life was beginning. Rakitin found a position as a bookkeeper at the state bank, settled there well and never thought about changing his place of work.

But the great October revolution had taken something out of his soul. Everything around him became empty and lonely. He stopped feeling life. In his solitude he often came up to madness, until finally he found, as this often happens in such cases, solace in alcohol. Since then Rakitin could be seen at definite time at always fixed places: in the morning till the end of the workday – at the bank, then till eleven-twelve at night – at the pub, and after that – at home. He never was anywhere else.

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A dirty pub with the low ceiling is filled with smoke and stench. At the simple wooden large and small tables covered by green oil-cloth the regulars sit and drink their unnumbered mug of beer. In the after work time the pub is filled with incessant sound of voices. Chance visitors are seldom coming here, because the pub looks so dirty and unfriendly from outside that everyone tries to slip by quickly.

Suddenly the doors burst open. Rakitin appears at the door. He stands still in the doorway for a while. When the regulars sitting at the tables, noticing him, stop talking, he makes a step forward and closes the door.

"Stand up!.. Captain Rakitin is coming!" his dashing order sounds. All together they stand up raising up their heavy beer mugs.

Rakitin approaches his favourite place near the counter, where stands an ever sober beer-house keeper, and gives an order:

"Sit down!"

He had an extraordinary ability to guess instantly the number of letters in a just heard word. No sooner had someone said the most intricate word that he pronounces the number of the letters it consisted of. While the bank fed him and clothed him, this

ability gave him to drink. And it gave him to drink until he loses his consciousness.

“Impeachment,” asks someone sitting at a distant table.

“Eleven,” answers Rakitin immediately and receives a mug of beer.

“Authoritarianism,” asks another one.

“Sixteen,” the bookkeeper answers at once and gets a second mug.

Within several minutes his small square table is filled to overflowing with beer mugs.

In this routine entertainment take part also the members of the Bolshevik party. They drink, talk, joke, and laugh together with him. But as the time has come, they were the ones who betrayed him to the “dear Father of the peoples” who had a shortage of bloody victims.

It is hard to say in what Rakitin could have been accused of. He never spoke about politics, never cursed the Soviet government because they just did not exist for him.

It is, of course, we, the just and righteous, who search for reasons of his arrest, search for the accusations; in our naïveté we wonder about the unlawfulness; but “there” exist reasons, “there” are found the accusations, “there” exist their own rules – the rules we would never be able to understand.

## The Prophet

A lot of people called him Moses. And why? Because he was a prophet in our hamlet. Well, his real name was Yankel, Yasha, and sometimes they respectfully called him Yakov Moiseyevich. And he was not, indeed, a prophet but just the most real shoemaker. And he did not live anywhere in Israel but in our hamlet where there were half-and-half of Jews and others.

But do you know he prophesized very well. Truly, very well. Even some Russian people were surprised. Well, Jewish too, but frankly speaking, not all, because he prophesized, as they say, in secret. Do you know why in secret? Because one cannot prophesize better than the “true prophet”<sup>1</sup> but, you understand, even that it is dangerous. You understand what is a competition in the trade and what is a competition in the politics. It is a very dangerous thing, competition.

When the “true prophet” says that “life became better and life became more cheerful”<sup>2</sup> and some shoemaker Yasha says “may be someone feels more cheerful.” Then, what do you think, who and whom could the “true prophet” say to make bankrupt?

And do you know what the price of this one word, “could”? No, you do not know. You never lived in our hamlet and can not understand that these five letters—‘c’-‘o’-‘u’-‘l’-‘d’—may cost a man his life!

Did you know Lifshits, who was the director of a mill? Katsman, who was head of a creamery? The shop manager Belenkiy? No you did not know! You only knew Trotsky, Pyatakov, and Zinovyev,<sup>3</sup> who had cheerful life in due time. And even very cheerful. And, please, do not think that only Russians cried when “life became more cheerful.” Certainly you do not know what our hamlet’s prophet predicted, that all of us would live very cheerfully. And do you know when he predicted it? After he heard that there was no Tsar in Russia.

“Well, what do you want,” he was telling us after October’s revolution, “We shall live and shall see. We ourselves have built cheerful life and we will have to shatter it. Do you know what is it when there is no Tsar or Kaiser? Well, you will learn! You will learn it when they will make limit for residing in Moscow for Russians! No, you know nothing about it and do not understand it! And when you will understand it, it will already be too late!”

And will you tell that Yakov Moiseyevich is not a prophet?

And the shoemaker Yankel continued to tell us, “What are Jewish pogroms in Russia? It’s nothing! Do you know what kind of Jewish pogrom will be in the future? And with what kind of tears will be crying all eyes—poor and rich, party members and non party members, skinny and fat, tall and short, old and children? Oh, you do not know it! When you will find out, it will be too late!”

Our prophet was telling us about it in nineteen hundred and forty! But who remembers those words? No one remembers. Because after the war there was not one Jew and less than one-half of the others remained in our hamlet.

Well, what do you think? Do you think it is the end? No. You did not eat the

porridge yet and did not wash spoons yet.

Yankel asked, “How much did you pay for the revolution? For ‘living better and living cheerfully’? You get everything back and even with percentages!”

Well, now tell us, did we get back all with percentages?



## It Is Stifling Here

Georgy Nikolaevich Tubarov is from Petrograd, he is an old physicist. His wife is an actress. He is tall, upright with the chubby face and blue eyes always gazing slowly somewhere into space. He used to visit his neighbor on Sunday morning wearing his black great-coat.

"I need to think over..." he would say.

He would enter a nearly empty room (there was nothing to furnish with), where were only a simple long table and a bench. He would sit down, pull out of his pocket a bottle of moonshine and put it on the table.

"Don't you worry, I have my own crock," and would take out a small red glass. "Only to take something with it, my dear..."

"What would you like, Georgy Nikolaevich?"

"An onion... a bulb of onion..."

"Really!?"

"No, with this turbid liquid destined to enter the communicating vessels of my body needs a foul food, strong, onion. Got it?"

"But it is..."

"No objection please! Bitterness kills bitterness! And don't pay any attention to me... Close the door. I don't exist here. Got it?"

He sits there alone until the late evening, until dark night, drinks that disgusting moonshine, of which he has two-three bottles, and takes a chunk of onion.

Now and then the host enters and asks, "What is wrong, Georgy Nikolaevich, isn't life sweet anymore?"

"It is stifling here... Oh, how stifling!..

"Maybe I shall open the window-pane?" asks the slow-witted host.

"You don't understand, my dear... Not to open, instead, one needs to brick up all the windows and doors. Only then one may breathe freely... before the death because one will die without oxygen all the same."

"Did you drink in Petrograd, Georgy Nikolaevich?"

"In Petrograd? Hm... You know, the Christmas, ...New Year, or... the Easter dinner... You see one cannot eat pancakes without vodka...on those occasions... And anyway, are you an investigator for the affairs of exceptional drunkards?"

And he gazes again somewhere into the space with his slow blue eyes, as if trying to remember other occasions when he used to drink.

"I did not drink in Petrograd. And here I drink... It is stifling here... Do you understand?"

Late at the night his wife returns from the theatre.

"Please forgive me, for God's sake, my husband is ill... And I cannot give up my work. If he is fired or worse..." and the poor woman is afraid to add the horrible word.

The sleepy Tubarov would hear the familiar voice and correct her, "Not ill, but drunk, ...because it is stifling..."

The host together with the wife would lead the weakened physicist home, help him to undress, to lay him in bed and every time remind them, "Please remove the Tsar's portrait – it's an inopportune time – should someone see it..."

## The Portrait of a Boor

In a big room, there is only a table and a bench. Also a shelf with books and student's notebooks. Above the shelf, a portrait of Molotov.<sup>1</sup> That's necessary. A frail, skinny, emaciated, man in his forties is sitting at the table. He clenches his head with his hands and it is unclear whether he is thinking with his eyes closed or whether he is sleeping. In front of him on the table, a bottle of vodka, a glass and a plate with a giant rusted herring, next to it an onion. On the side, there lies a daily ration of bread from which the man pinches little pieces, smells them for a long time and chews them almost as long as he smells it, saying:

"Bread...that's a Russian food... If there is no bread, there is no Russian food... Or for that matter anything Russian... Only stench... suffocating... choking... rev-vo-lutionary... Ha-ha-ha!.. They organized a new "government"! It is a preposterous piece of buffoonery, with the merry-go-round!.. And death penalty! They play "Internationale" hymn on a street organ, they force people to dance the dance of the death!.. All that to entertain the Kremlin flayers!.. Fanatics? No, lunatics... not fanatics! They are the barbarians... Sadists by vocation!.. The master torturers from the Dark Ages!.. Not simply executioners... but monsters of cruelty, their greatest joy – to drink blood squeezed out of people!..

The man raises his head. His eyes, drunken with the Soviet bitters, met with the portrait of Molotov. He pours some vodka into the empty glass, walks with insecure steps up to the bookshelf and raising the glass, says:

"Mikhailovich, shall we have a shot? Huh? Tell me in Russian. I don't quite understand today's language. You used to be Russian?.. Huh? Are you saying that you sold yourself? A-h-h, I see, according to your vocation!! Even high vocation!.. Well, forget it for a minute... Let's drink for the good old times, for the Russian time... Let's forget for a minute the present. O-h-h, you mean you don't want to forget... I see..." The man placed the glass on the shelf, then walked up to the table and poured another glass, then returned to the portrait again.

"Well, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, shall we have another one? Shall we clink glasses, have a toast? Perhaps, you are tired of drinking in the company of those riff-raffs, those Klims, Senkas, Josephs...<sup>2</sup> Well, those are not simply... Oh no, they are not simply criminals-murderers, oh no, ...Those are mongrels... degenerate beasts. They watch with pleasure how rusted metal is inserted into crucified Russia, how their volunteers-toads are poking sharpened knives into its already tortured body, how the red, warm, and sticky blood is flowing under their dirty feet! Only then, they drink to the health of the Satan!.. With loud wild laughing, they welcome the tormenting moans of the innocent victims... They go mad in their wild partying, when the red bacchantes, throwing on the floor their communist party cards along with their cheaply made soviet clothes, dance naked, in front of the skeletons of the tortured to death Russian people... This is the red idyll!! The socialistic bliss... The Communist paradise!"

He raised the glass to the portrait hanging low on the wall:

"Let's have a toast for the Soviet intelligentsia! Would you like to?.. No? You are silent?.. Perhaps, just simply for the intelligentsia?.. Not even for them? How about for a man? Well, just for a simple human being!.. You are still silent?... O-h-h!.. You'd like to drink for the Communist Party card? For the death penalty? For the hunger? For the plunder? For choking to death everything that is breathing? For the red bacchantes? For the executioners? For the idiotic wisdom of your teacher, whom you are serving though being very careful?"

He came back to the table. Sat down for a second. Then, he jumped up infuriated, hitting his fist on the table, yelling:

"Intellectual boor! Spiritual pervert! A criminal with traits of a gorilla, with a hidden hunger of a hyena, to feed on carcasses... of Russian Man! Oh you! You ugly mug! That well-fed, satisfied, fat, face shining from other people's blood!

"A tie, white cuffs and collars...A hat of soft felt... Gloves... pince-nez... You are representing the proletarians abroad. Villain!.. You would be better taking with you a Russian muzhik, swollen from hunger, almost naked... You would be better taking a half-starving laborer wearing a junk clothing made by the standard soviet clothing industry... Or perhaps, one from intelligentsia mute from fear. Oh you, intelligent boor!.. You are hiding your blood-stained hands under the kid skin gloves, your idiot-criminal ravings of a madman under the expensive felt hat; and with a sweet smile of an irresponsible one, a scary truth, as a vision of death, which is freezing the blood in human veins... But, watch out, you intellectual boor! The hour of revenge is coming, and the Russian people will not forget you!.. Because you are even more evil than the 'wise one'."!..

The tired man sat down. He glanced at the portrait once again.

"Your eyes are full of arrogance, contempt, disgust and how much anger! My God! Towards whom? Towards a Russian man? Towards Russia? What for? Because it gave you a long life? Education? Because it supported you? But where did you receive the boorish education? Where, the villain, speak, otherwise I will you..." and the man jumped up to the portrait with the clenched fists... and then powerlessly lowered his hands...

"What? What can I do?.. I'm powerless... I'm worthless ... I'm lone man... Oh! If I had the strength to sweep away all this dirt... To drawn all this garbage of a human society in their own garbage!.. Human?. No... Devilish, but not human... Devilish, a tribe of misanthropes!.."

Choking from powerlessness, the man has raised a portrait, turned it to the other side on the adhered cord, slapped it against the wall, and left it to hang exposing the backside. "That's enough!.. Your well-fed muzzle is too vile!.. Your intelligence is too boorish!. You are without honor, without dignity, without humanity, without soul!.. Because you, as all the rest of them, have renounced Christ, Russia... Apostates couldn't be different... Oh, you! Obliging footmen of its devilish majesty!.."

That's how each new day would begin. So within long months when children left for school, and wife for work, the teacher of mathematics, popular in a city, known in the region, whose surname was well known in Popular Commissariat of Education in Moscow, was sharing his powerlessness, lack of rights and hopelessness with the green serpent, searching for the answer only on one question, "Who, am I?.."

In the fall, as usual, he came to school in which he worked about two decades, but in the nominal schedule he did not find his last name. The principal was very kind, however could not explain anything.

"I don't know, they have sent a new mathematician to replace you. I thought that they sent you somewhere because you were promoted..."

In city department of popular education nobody knew anything, "It was an order of the department head..."

It was impossible to get to see the department head... Only somewhere in the district office, one of the insignificant clerks secretly asked, "Are you a foreigner?"

"What do you mean a foreigner?" asked the teacher, struck by surprise.

"Are you a Pole?"

"A Pole?!."

The teacher came back home. It was a waste of time to travel. The doors were tightly shut everywhere. He started writing. To Moscow to the Popular Commissariat of Education, to the newspapers, to the district commissariat, to the regional commissariat. Dozens of letters were sent. The teacher was waiting for an answer... and drinking with "the intelligent boor"...

Yes, his father was born in Vilenskaya district. Yes, his father was a Pole. A Russian Pole, that is. His father in his youth has moved to the southern region of Russia. He was a Catholic and attended the Catholic church.

But the son was born here, in Taganrog. Here, he has graduated from a gymnasium, and in Moscow – from the University. All of his life he lived in his native city. As the son, he does not know either the Polish language, or the Catholic church. He was baptized in the Russian Orthodox church. But this is not a valid argument for the Party card! After all, the Party card is without soul and without thought! It rushes with a swift thrust on a general Party line and cripples human lives on the right and on the left!.. After all, to the dead the life is indifferent...

In three years the teacher has died. There is no answer on this possibly even now. A Party card has too many troubles. It is too busy...

The wife of the mathematician – is an authentic Pole. She was born in Warsaw. She speaks Polish fluently. She is a Catholic. But the Party card has not touched her.

Is it strange? Oh no, it is totally normal. If someone wishes to represent the communist power as an "order" or a "system", that does the big error or serves the Party card.

"Beat, smash, instill fear and horror in all who will get under a hand!" – such is the Kremlin's motto from which not only the poor "school workers" get hurt, not only the "foreigners" born by the Russian life, but also the Party cards...

If you wish to imagine an "order" or a "system" of communism, it is not difficult. Imagine an enormous crowd at a fair. Suddenly a heart-rending shout is heard, "Help! Plunder!"

The robbers to cover up the tracks, are the first start to shout, "Oh, there he is, get him, get him!.."

This is where "the socialist order" or "communist system" begins.

## The Last Trial

Comrade Stradaltsev went to the North. To the Far North. Even farther—to the Very Far North. Because, when he arrived at the destination together with the other fellows like him, a voice of someone who, vigorously pointing with a hand in opposite directions, welcomed them with significant words:

“Here, you skunks-counter-revolutionaries, is death! There, is the ocean-sea, and there, is the impassable taiga. Nowhere to escape. There was not a single case for anyone to return home. That’s the end! Kaput! You’re finished! Do you get it skunk-counter-revolutionaries !?” and continued to repeat his welcome over and over again.

It is unclear if the skunk-counterrevolutionaries got it or not but they began to build communism even at the world’s end. And comrade Stradaltsev, too, of course.

Well, comrade Stradaltsev is creating communism and his lawful wife is bustling. For some reason she wants her lawful husband to build communism closer to her. Maybe, it seems to her, it is unpleasant for a wife to live without a husband; and for little daughter without her father; but maybe, she has other motivations, so she is bustling. And even though they told her in some establishment that her case is hopeless because, you know, her husband pleaded guilty, but well, she does her thing—she goes, writes, makes journeys, asks, but she gets hopeless answers everywhere.

Comrade Stradaltseva dug in her relatives list and remembered that her cousin has a prosecutor’s position in some republic. She sighed heavily, “Not without a freak in the family,” and went to bow to this freak.

Of course comrade The Freak clowned, give himself airs, but his sister’s tears awoke human feelings in him. He, personally, took to bustling.

It is difficult to tell if the bustles took a long or a short time, but the hour of liberation for comrade Stradaltsev arrived. He finished building communism at the end of the Earth. He received money for traveling from his lawful wife and began his long return journey.

They brought him to the railroad station. He bought a ticket to his final destination. Of course, with money, that which his lawful wife sent him. He gave the cashier two pieces of one-hundred rubles—two hundred rubles—he got the change, put it in his pocket, and went for a walk in the station, waiting for the train.

He walked into the first class hall where the passengers should wait and noticed a small refreshment stand. Saw cigarettes on the shelves. He remembered that he was a smoker and longing to inhale the cigarette smoke after a three year break, could not hold back on buying a couple of packs of real cigarettes for his long journey.

He sat down at a little table near the stand, opened one pack, took out a cigarette, smelled the tobacco, smiled with pleasure, and started smoking. He sits there, enjoys himself, lets out smoke rings, inhales; and something even began to ferment a little in his head from the long break.

Suddenly, from nowhere, a man appeared in front of him... In uniform, of course. Not in a full dress but in a very familiar to him and impressive.

"Mister, follow me," a melodic voice said.

Of course, comrade Stradaltsev followed this man in the impressive uniform, entered a room, wondering what had happened. The man in the uniform showed him a banknote and asked with a pleasant voice, "Is this your money, citizen?"

"I don't know," said comrade Stradaltsev. "I bought a ticket in the train station ticket office, I did not pay with this type of money because the bills were bigger, but the cigarettes I bought with the change from the ticket, maybe, they were those banknotes, I can't assure you because these papers aren't marked..."

"Why not marked?! Admire, citizen, the work of your own hands!"

Comrade Stradaltsev put on glasses with shaking hands, looked at the soviet banknote, and was struck with fear. The banknote was printed but on Lenin's physiognomy there was a hand written unprintable word. With a chemical pencil, so that it does not wash off. True, printed in block letters. Comrade Stradaltsev looked at it every which way but the word was still unprintable... He only escaped "from there" and now... To go "there" again...

And comrade from the refreshment stand who was in the room, began to demonstrate his evidence to the man in the impressive uniform, "He bought the cigarettes. He paid with cash because we don't give credit in the train station stand. Well, we then gave him cigarettes and he gave us this money. Well, at first, we didn't pay any attention, but then we looked and there it was—this word written on the face of dear Illich-Lenin. So, therefore, we came to you for help, and in general, to uncover this enemy's attack."

The man in the impressive uniform watched and went straight to the point, "Confess, citizen, did you write on the face of the honorable defunct Illich-Lenin?"

"Have mercy," said comrade Stradaltsev, "I'm not at fault for the circulation of the banknotes with unprintable words on Illich-Lenin's physiognomy! I couldn't do this even for another reason, respected man, only because firstly, I want to live! And secondly, I couldn't commit this kind of a crime because, in this very moment, I just came out liberated from 'there' and I don't want right away to go back 'there'. Thirdly, I couldn't commit such a crime because my lawful wife and my underage daughter have been missing me for three years and I don't even know if they still live in our socialist darkness or not. I received this banknote in this railroad station ticket office when the cashier gave me the change for the ticket."

Even though, the man in the impressive uniform was strict, comrade Stradaltsev's tears awoke him. Not that soon, though. For two hours comrade Stradaltsev was begging him. He succeeded but with a great effort. He only received a firm warning lecture for his journey and an order to appear in his hometown to the co-worker of this man in the impressive uniform to give a report of what had happened.

Comrade Stradaltsev returned home. He found his lawful wife and underage daughter safe. But there was a commotion in his hometown on the occasion of the German invasion on the dear soviet land. There was no time for reports...

Now comrade Stradaltsev is somewhere in American Republic. They say that there no one writes unprintable words on the banknotes. Maybe because these kinds of words do not exist there and maybe it is a sign of love for their own country, or a sign of respect, I don't know.

## The Count

In the 1930's, a certain Trubetzkoy worked at one of the shafts of the coal mine as secretary of the Komsomol organization. He was an attractive young man, who not only carried on his Komsomol work energetically, but also ardently courted a girl member of the Komsomol, named Tanya.

It is not possible to hide a love affair in a small village, so every one knew about this courtship, but they saw no harm in it. It was, after all, only natural—youth is the time for love.

One evening, returning from a Komsomol meeting, Trubetzkoy, as always, spoke lovingly to her with tender and caressing words. It seemed as if the summer night inspired their loving hearts, and the roguish moon, winking her eye, encouraged them when they felt bashful. Tanya loved Trubetzkoy, but she was too shy to say the little "yes" which the young man so longed to hear. "To you alone, Tanya, I can say who I really am."

Although the secretary addressed her as "Thou" when they were in the company of others, like he did all other Komsomol members, yet when they were alone, as a mark of love and respect, he did not permit himself to do this, but always said, "You."

"Who are you then, a prince... of the nobility?"

"Almost."

"Nowadays there are only princes abroad."

"I am Count Trubetzkoy!" And the Komsomol member told her that he had lost his parents at the time of the revolution, that chance had led him to the children's home, and that finally he had come to the mine.

Tanya said nothing. She was astounded and frightened. Was all this really true? Or was the secretary trying to impress his sweetheart with his aristocratic origin? No one knows. What is known, however, is that on that same night Trubetzkoy vanished!

When the disappearance of the secretary was discovered, the party organizer called a private meeting of the Komsomol organization at which he cross-examined the members in order to find out the reason for Trubetzkoy's flight. But since no one else could furnish him with any information, everyone began to look at Tanya. The party organizer called her to the table.

"You must know where Trubetzkoy is."

"No, I do not know where he is."

"Well, at any rate, you must know why he ran away."

The girl remained silent a long time, but the threatening voice continued to demand the truth "In the name of the Komsomol." The silent tension in the room increased. Heavy tears appeared in the girl's eyes.

"If you will not talk here you will be made to talk elsewhere." Everyone knew that "elsewhere" meant the GPU... (the secret police). Blushing and agitated, Tanya told them of the last confession of the young man she loved.



## Percentages

I have met Tit Titych recently. He lives abroad. He left his motherland voluntarily, of his own free will. He held no particular grudges against communism... And what kind of grudges could he have? Maybe, some unspoken animosity only. And that's it. Yet that same communism had much more against him. It demanded the whole account from Tit Titych—on a daily basis. But why do we have to waste breath talking about it. Let him speak about it himself. This is what he told me—all about it—in a more than convincing manner, word by word.

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They have always told me that the worker in our country, the country of the victorious socialism, lives better than all the others in the world. So, I thought, let him live, and about how he lives that life, we know ourselves! We have started the revolution that brought, so to say, ill luck upon our own heads and now we cannot find a way out of its consequences.

Let us say, there lived a working-person, or, just a worker, as he was called before the revolution. Well, it is known to all, he was working. He received from the damned capitalist his wages on time. He had his vacations. Well, regrettably, the worker himself could have been considered a sort of a capitalist, a damned capitalist, of course. What else could you call such a specimen in our naughty world who owned a house, a hundred of hens, ducks, geese, turkeys, a pair of piglets for the Christian holidays, a cow, and a plot of land for a garden and a vegetable garden?.. Being an old man, I got too tired of listing all the worker's disadvantages at the old time capitalistic living before the revolution. Now we don't have all these available... Now we all are working-persons, and, therefore, the proletarian government has liberated us, so to speak, from the extreme load of everyday living—we don't own any houses, or hens, or ducks, to say nothing of pigs or cows—you should not even dream about it, highly respected citizen, don't even mention it! Because you, certainly, would be declared as kulak with all the following consequences of being deported to Siberia. And who, tell me please, needs such a journey? That's how now we have changed from being workers to become proletarians!

Everything has flown away; we don't even have money to buy just a piece of bread! And it is not simple anymore to earn a living.

Have you heard about Stakhanovite<sup>1</sup> movement? In accordance with stakhanovite principles our work now is measured—not on an hourly basis, but on the output rate percentage basis! In the cursed former times the worker worked ten hours for his master, but every hour of those ten was paid. And that worker lived as a cousin to the king—had enough to eat, could get drunk, had enough tobacco in his pouch, and the kids were in school...

I am telling this because I also come from such a family. My dad worked ten hours a day earning enough to support not only himself, but to feed and clothe the family of ten, to afford an education for all of us, and to drink vodka sometimes. And as

for me, I hadn't been so lucky to live for long during the cursed old regime... There came the revolution... Well, it started... Everything went topsy-turvy. Nobody could make out at first who was right, who was wrong. And when they recognized it at last, it was too late. So we had lived, so they said, the new life—the socialist way. Although we worked only eight hours a day, but the wages were such that one could not support not only the family of ten but could not feed himself.

It is true, every year they promised us... If we just fulfill the norm percentages ahead of the schedule, we'll live happily ever after at last. Then the socialist paradise will come into life. Not just a paradise, but a super-paradise. Because we had every thing "super" over there...

Of course, we worked in a stakhanovite way. One couldn't talk. Work rate percentages were counted for us. We worked in a shop. We drilled holes in the metal. Everything was beginning according to the established norms. They give you a norm quota, and you have to develop the new one—the socialist one—exceeding so many percentages from the one given to you. So we were sweating for several hours at the meeting—inventing the new quota. Writing competitive socialist emulation agreements. How many holes can be drilled in an hour? Is it eight? May it be ten? What kind of metal? What quality? What metal thickness? And what cutters? What machine? Energy—electric, of course, but sometimes the motor has not enough power to rotate idly.

They should have had inspected the stomach of the proletarians—did they have anything more substantial there than just lemonade from the factory canteen. Everything had to be taken into consideration. And one cannot say it was not. Only they never took a look inside of the proletarian. All the other things were taken into account. Even those things that were highly improbable to happen. For example, if the metal happens to be soft, like copper. Then they'll have to contemplate about how many holes could be drilled in it.

There was one weird drillman in our shop, Ivan Yakovlevich Petushkov. He was a funny little man. Once he had an idea to ask a question during such a meeting, "Should there by a chance the tin cutters will be delivered to the plant, how many holes according to the quota are we to drill in the armoured metal block?"

Before he could finish his sentence, he was interrupted by the secretary of Party organization "You," he said, "comrade Petushkov, are creating the unhealthy comments at such important meeting! We understand clearly your ironic attitude!"

Needless to say, comrade Petushkov disappeared soon. He was nowhere to be seen in our plant.

Well, they would count all the holes, write a heap of agreements and we come up and sign them. Because we don't have anything else there to do—everything had been printed in advance in the printing house—only the signature was to be added.

"The drillman of the plant 'Red devil' (this name is recommended) is committed to participate in a socialist competition with the drillman of the plant 'Stalin's beast' (this name is also recommended) to drill 15,000 holes in a year." And we added our signature.

That was the beginning of quota's percentage competition. The sweat stood out on our foreheads, but the person had to drill like mad to fulfil the percentage plan. It was lucky if the metal happen to be light and thin—then one could make up for the previously lost time, but what if they put one to work with steel? Or what is worse, with the armoured metal blocks? Well, you knew at once that the whole norm was lost and your

wages would sink to the bottom. You could forget about feeding even yourself. I used to warn my wife, "We are to work with armoured metal blocks now. So you have to earn your living." But how was it possible? There was no honest job to be found at the time that would feed you. You could not move to the countryside, as the peasants themselves had then nothing to eat in their collective farms. And it was known, that in town you were not allowed to work on the side either. That's why the home servants stopped to exist. So, my wife stood in line for hours and then sold her state shops' purchases in the flea market. In that way she managed to make some money in order to maintain me till the end of the month... That's the kind of rate percentages we had there! It's not like here.

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And in this country percentages are completely different. What one needs to talk about is to compare them with the Soviet Union percentages. I have been working here only for six years, and a nice sum has already accumulated in my bank account, and the percentages from that are slowly added to it... At least in our old age my wife and I think to live so the percentages would work for us and not the other way around.

What else could I add more here?

## According to the Plan

Shamilin, a technician for precise mechanics, breathed in deeply, feeling an unusual freedom in his movements, in his words and thoughts. True, even before he had not felt himself constrained, not afraid of anything, because he had never done, thought, or said anything reprehensible, although destiny had prepared for him, not guilty of anything, to pass the test of severe ordeals whose traces would likely remain for the rest of his life. Perhaps that was why he was feeling now, after the Bolsheviks had fled the town, the same extraordinary surge of energy that he always felt when beginning to tinker with the minute details of intricate mechanisms. Now he had a feeling of unlimited freedom, and a creative impulse rose in him. That which had been submerged in him under the pressure of unbelievable sufferings, was now coming to life again.

What excellent prospects, so it would seem, could have been expected in the Soviet state by a young man, an excellent specialist, a most conscientious worker – taking into account that all the Shamilins, since his great-grandparents, had been truly working-class people? Who, if not someone like him, a man who attended punctually all the numerous meetings, loyally voted according to the Party line on every issue, even in the smallest matters arising in his factory, who paid unfailingly his union dues, who was a hundred percent subscriber to the government loans, he, an impeccable person from every point of view of communist government, surely he could expect, if not the special attention, but at least a safe existence? Maybe his one flaw consisted in not being a Party member? But that is not a crime! Thousands of such specialists work loyally around the state and are even rewarded by the government.

Still, clean as Shamilin was in every respect, he had to pay a visit the GPU, and not just pay a visit, but to undergo, in addition to nine months sitting in an underground cell, tortures inflicted by such select masters of this art that they might be envied by medieval inquisitors.

A car delivered him to the GPU at one o'clock in the morning. He remembers perfectly well that December night in 1937. He was led into a splendidly furnished room, flooded with bright light. A large soft rug muffled his steps. The red velvet of the furniture was new, the polished wood reflected the objects. On the rug, in the middle of the room, there was a table. On the table, a ream of paper, ink, paper-weight; a little further – beer, wine, vodka, various snacks, fruits, candies, cigarettes and even cigars. Many of these things an ordinary person cannot see in the marketplace, but here – all is free for you.

"Sit down and write. If you would like to eat, drink, smoke, please help yourself, all this is for you," a GPU agent told him.

"Thank you, but what should I write?"

"Everything that you know about your case."

"What case?"

"Do not pretend ignorance. We know all about it. The sooner you confess, the better it will be for you."

"But I have nothing to confess..."

"This is the GPU. You were not invited here to play games. For the last time I am telling you, 'sit down and write.' I am leaving but you will be under observation." The agent turned around abruptly and went out.

Shamilin pensively sat down at the table. Whenever he started to doze, a rude shout "No sleeping!" returned him to the reality that he simply couldn't understand, believing his arrest to be a mistake.

Several sleepless nights with no food or water failed to make him write a single word, and he was transferred to a cell, calculated to contain ten persons, but in which he was the fifty-seventh. Huddled here were shadows with feeble voices, covered with bruises and abscesses.

Shamilin knew that it was day outside and a December frost, but here, there was perpetual night and unbearable heat. A dirty bulb barely lighted the cell. Half-naked bodies, closely pressed together, were lying on the concrete floor. They were drenched. Under the ceiling a heavy cloud of vapor floated slowly, disappearing in a narrow stream through a small aperture that never let in any daylight.

Shamilin lay in this cell for about a month, inhaling the stench of the perspiring human bodies and the slop pail, observing the life of the "enemies of the people" and their sufferings. Here, in this little filthy hole, they kept swearing to each other, with breast-beating and tears and whimpers and howls, that they had never, not in word, nor act, nor thought, "sinned" against the Soviet power... Some of them would disappear, others would replace them... All the inmates of the horrid dungeon experienced terrible torments.

At last, Shamilin, too, was called out for interrogation. He kept stubbornly denying his "case", refusing to "confess". The investigator had no accusations – he just pressured the man before him to "reveal the plot and confess", but there was not even a tiniest thread for him to clutch and to turn into a "case."

Methods of Soviet investigation are broad, and the young technician was now subjected to torture. His fingers were jammed in a door, his fingernails were torn off, his teeth pulled out, his soles were burned and stabbed with pins, he stood immobile for hours under dripping cold water, he sat for days in a pitch dark cell without water after being fed salt fish, he endured even the "Andreev's conveyor."

The "Andreev's conveyor" was introduced in the transportation divisions of the GPU in the very first year of Andreev's work as the People's Commissar of Railroad Transportation (hence its name). It consisted in making the "criminal" to sit on a four-squared stool in such a way that the lowest vertebra, the coccyx, was pressed against one corner, supporting the body's whole weight. This pressure can be at first alleviated by bending one's legs, but not for long. One cannot sit long on the "Andreev's conveyor", people faint and fall, they are kicked into consciousness and forced to sit down again – until the victim either goes "voluntarily" to give evidence, or is carried back into the cell until the next torture session.

Tortures were repeated and alternated, yet the investigator, who beat up Shamilin mercilessly during each interrogation, could not get a word out of him.

Thus elapsed nine months. The investigator reported to his superior. A "witness" for the prosecution – the Party secretary of Shamilin's factory – was called in for a session of a judicial "troika." After Shamilin's innocence became absolutely clear, when

it turned out that there was neither a “case” nor an “offence” of any kind, the “court” chairman asked the “witness”:

“Why then did you send the Shamilin's 'material' to the GPU?”

“Because the GPU sent a quota to our factory according to the plan, according to which we had to select thirty five engineering or technical workers. I wrote a list of the “suspicious ones,” and sent it to the GPU. Had I not done it, I would have gone there myself, as an ‘enemy of the people.’”

The secretary went back to his factory. Shamilin signed a “nondisclosure pledge” and was released.

Now he was standing on a tall riverbank, scrutinizing the hideous outlines of industrial plants blown up by the Bolsheviks, the plants that had once gracefully adorned the remote landscape. He felt an urge to create, but the factory where he had worked did not exist any more. Nobody needed his energy. His knowledge could not earn him a slice of bread. Now he rejected Bolshevism, but he could not accept Nazism. For a year he struggled to bring bread to his family.

The Germans retreated. For a month, the Bolsheviks had control again, than fresh SS troops turned them to flight again. Shamilin, like all other men, “voluntarily” joined the Red Army and left the town...

## On the Border

I have a brother. He is a junior brother. Frankly speaking, he is not truly little. All of his teeth are developed and he is wearing long pants.

Although he is junior, he is talented. Self-taught joker. He had no place to study this craft. Actually, in general he did study and showed his engineering diploma only at the places he had a real need to do so. He was a shy boy in our family. But from the childhood he was witty. And that's without being a student of that faculty. He just had that talent. I do not remember exactly what situation happened (we had a lot of them, almost every day) but it was something about a decree. It was clear that "He"<sup>1</sup> signed a decree – "J. Stalin." So then, my brother read that bracing decree and said, "What a 'Vozh-zha'!" He used this word sarcastically but appropriately as in Russian it has two meanings: a folk's derisive name for a word "Leader" and a noun "the rain" – a whip used to check or guide a horse. So, for a better savoring of our story by the readers we shall use the translated English expression: "What a Rein!"<sup>2</sup>

Since that historical day, we called Vissarionovich<sup>3</sup> as "the Rein". Of course, we used this name only between us. Strangers like wives, children small and overgrown, did not know that. And there is no sense to mention common workers and peasants-collective farm workers.

This so-called high rank<sup>4</sup> is probably not clear for an old immigrant or anyone who never lived in those days in the Soviet Union but for a new one it is completely clear. If "The Rein" slaps one poor soviet man, he will regret being born and ever seeing God's light, and the next man may never see it at all. Better, never be in "His" way.

"The Rein" slaps the happy mankind and happy mankind is lamenting from joy, "Long live!" and at the same time thinking, "If only 'He' would croak soon!" It is the truth, have no doubt.

It is known, over there happy man kinds were differentiated. There was the soviet man kind and foreign man kind. To be sure, from the first soviet day the foreigners were sent packing. At the beginning were driven away the Polish, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians because these ladies and gentlemen had their own countries. Not the governments, of course, just the so-called republics. Well, after them all others such as Bulgarians, Romanians, and Greeks went to their countries. However, these went to their formal states<sup>5</sup> according to their passports— if one had Romanian passport, he voluntarily but, certainly enforced by an order, was welcome to their king— because for us here, we need just simple people that can be slapped with "the Rein" and no one would complain.

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It is past nineteen-hundred-thirties. The matters are not going well in the Soviet State. Sometimes Kuzkin's<sup>6</sup> beetles declare a state of siege in the fields. Sometimes Kuzkin's mother appears in the factories and the socialist percentages meanwhile – not very good. Of course, according to the newspapers, everything is calm and smooth and

Stalin's paradise. But in real life, ladies and gentlemen, wherever one looks – the capitalist's surroundings are aiming to destroy the first in the world completely happy mankind. As a matter of fact, not so much the mankind, as to put an end to "The Rain."

It needs to be said that "The Rein" is afraid of no one; he is brave. The Kremlin's walls are all around, security guards are hand-picked, yet sometimes his body shivers from morning to evening, day after day, since, one can say, the birth of "the Reinism," in plain words, since the glorification of "The Rein."

The end results – the things were not going well in the Soviet State. Why was it so? Well, so many "enemies" were destroyed that there was no one left to carry out the production plan. But the excuse – it is the foreign element that undermines the economy. But where is the foreign element if every foreign citizen was forced to leave the country long ago? How could it be? There cannot be such misunderstandings. But socialism – is control of performance. Thus, "The Rein" gave his internal affairs chief the task of checking thoroughly among numerous happy people in order to find any foreign capitalistic sharks and spies working in favor of some neighboring states, therefore, reducing the percentages of happy and wealthy soviet life. Of course, they checked and became horrified. "The Rein" was indignant, "How can this be? In what year after the revolution in my sovereign territory live Armenian people with Turkish passports? Slap them all!.."

So they slapped them. After all, one would not write the notes to the Turkish government about the masses of unreliable capitalistic elements that were trying to undermine the apparent socialistic prosperity. From one side, it is a pity to waste paper because there is a lack of paper caused by the reduction of the production program at the paper factories.<sup>7</sup> From the other side – how many "musicians"<sup>8</sup> do you need to have in the office of foreign affairs? In addition, who will write such a note! One attaché would write a violin clef, another one a bass clef, one would have C sharp, and the other D flat, and the third one – D natural! How about tempos, pauses, and crescendos... Is it possible to follow so many timbres? The peoples commissariat's bureaucrats are not conservatoire graduates! Therefore, they decided to act, so to say, in the simplest way.

They gathered all these capitalistic sharks and spies working in favor of neighboring states, the citizens Armenians with Turkish passports, and announced to them that they have to leave the socialist state within twenty-four hours, making sure to leave their possessions behind.

It is clear that one capitalistic predator did not mind leaving his property behind, such as for instance, brushes, shoe polish and the box on which he was polishing boots of the passers-by for twenty years; while another, in spite of the fact that it is difficult to part with a hawker's tray with buttons, needles and hairpins, did nevertheless give it anyway, completely voluntarily and free of charge to his neighbor, the happy soviet person. Some other spy is sitting in Sobachevka<sup>9</sup> (Dog's Place) and sewing some sort of slippers and repairing footwear. While another spy concealed himself in the baker's shop by selling bagels for how many soviet years! All of them were letting out the most important state secrets to the neighboring capitalistic states, reducing socialistic percentages in industry and agriculture, and in general demoralizing soviet cultural life.

A special train was delivered for these unreliable elements. All "sleeping" cars were designed for a distant, so-called, quiet trip for forty people or for eight horses.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, those sharks and spies did not have any horses, only some possessions



and those were insignificant. Certainly, if in such “comfortable” cars found a room, let us say, about fifty sharks with their baby sharks, or spies with their baby spies, the soviet government did not object to it because it meant a reduction of expenses and, actually, it rammed the foreign population, which had assumed to be able to accommodate themselves with plenty of room.

The super-powered steam engine named FD (Felix Dzerzhinsky) whistled and the foreigners, maybe looking sadly at their native places, departed under their private security guards,<sup>11</sup> to the far Turkish border. Some readers may be curious about the security guards. Why the capitalistic elements should have private security guards? What did you think? It’s for any unexpected situations that may arise. You know, for example, if suddenly there would be an attack on the capitalistic express by some backward, not completely politically-conscious soviet element; or, you know, if someone’s property falls down from a “sleeping car”; or some Turkish citizen accidentally loses his way at a solitary station with the intention to return to his own home occupied for many years. You know, anything may happen on the way, especially on the long-way. In one word, security there was extremely needed.

The express is rushing, of course with all its locomotive power, making the necessary stops. There, locomotive needs to catch its breath, in other place to have a rest stop for spies and sharks, because these “sleeping” cars for forty people or eight horses were intended, as you know, exclusively for sleeping.

It is clear that the distance from Kharkov to the Turkish border was covered in a short record time that means the foreign citizens almost reached their target in one-and-one-half months.

So they arrived. Let us say, “Esesera”<sup>12</sup> is here and there – the Turkish state, the new motherland – one may say, at arms length. The customs procedure is taking place. Every spy and especially every predator-shark was informed that it is prohibited to take gold out from “Esesera.”

Foreign citizens became indignant. What kind of gold can there be? Not one happy citizen in “Esesera” can purchase it for any amount of soviet money because, ladies and gentlemen, there are no such shops selling gold. The young generation, endowed with Stalin’s caress, could not even imagine the color of gold. This definition is completely abstract. Of course, maybe not in Moscow, or inside the Kremlin... but this is already, one can say, an inner-party matter and is not a subject to divulging.

But the customs authorities simply badgered the foreign-nationals that arrived by special express and strongly insisted on that issue. It is difficult to say why they were insisting so hard – either an Armenian Judas informed them or their spy slipped into this shark-spy’s organization – but the situation of these foreign-nationals became somewhere between the earth and the sky.

The foreign-nationals sat there and kept silent as if they could not understand the language. To be sure, it was tried to use Russian, Armenian, and Turkish, but they remained silent. It is clear that the authorities did not want to use force and to meddle in the foreigners’ private lives, because these foreign-nationals would go to Turkey and begin telling slanderous things about “Esesera.”

So, the border chiefs made peaceful proposal to think about this tense international situation and to report to them in one hour about their Armenian decision. The border authorities stepped back for a while but the foreigner-citizens continued to

remain silent, chewing bread and swallowing *ryzhiky*<sup>13</sup> – the Tzars' golden coins – not even drinking water. They swallowed coins and sat quietly, not talking and just waiting for the future ensuing events.

In one hour, the border authorities returned and began asking questions. The foreigner-citizens remained silent. The border authorities had to forgo the unenviable "Esesera's" reputation and started to search the shark-spy's luggage. No matter how hard they tried to look through they could not find any gold.

"So," said the authorities, "we will take the gold out from inside of you!" Obviously, some Judas or their spy was there and was informing them about all of the foreigner-citizens movements.

Well, as it was said – it was done. They invited some number of the shark-spies of both sexes to the border office for a gold mining operation, presented them with an obligatory big portion of castor oil and put them in rooms "For Men" and "For Women" with some enameled pots, saying, "Work foreigner-citizens, for the benefit of the happy and wealthy "Esesera" population!" Cerberuses just walking around and watching so some greedy shark or spy don't tries to swallow any golden coins again, after excreting them, because the castor oil costs the soviet labor money.

They passed the entire foreign element through this gold mining operation successfully. Perhaps, some of them managed to hold on to some ryzhik in their blind gut – it is unknown but most of them gave up their gold coins voluntarily.

## Stakhanovshchina Without Enthusiasm

"It has to be printed faster..."

"Victor Ivanovich, my dear, you know that our 'stakhanov's'<sup>1</sup> work in this respect is limited by the 'vigilant eye...'"

"I know it well. But stakhanovshchina<sup>2</sup> is just what we're writing about here. Understand me: the standards are 'voluntarily' increasing; the wage rates are 'voluntarily' reduced. What is it? Where could be seen such an imprudent and harsh exploitation of the workers? And, the most important, all this implemented through general meetings, the workers vote, raise their hands! Tell me then my dear, can one believe that a worker would put on such a yoke himself and even more with enthusiasm? Even a fool can see that it's a lie! What is the reason they are doing all this way? They could just take and put this yoke on the workers. But no, they need it done 'voluntarily,' 'with enthusiasm,' 'in honor of the Dear One!' Ah, such villains! The world has not yet seen such falsifiers!"

"But I still can't guarantee..."

"It has to be done fast, you understand, it has to! There is a workers' general meeting on Saturday. We need to agitate, to resist, to fight, we need to do everything to give moral support to the people. My friend, but you understand me very well!"

"What shift are you working beginning on Sunday?"

"After lunch...Afternoon shift..."

"Possibly, I'll have time to finish it by Wednesday... Here are only a hundred lines... I'll call you..."

"For God's sake, you very well know that it's needed."

"Yes, Victor Ivanovich, I'll try to do everything possible."

The engineer and the proofreader said goodbye, affectionately shaking each other's hands.

On Monday, as always, the proofreader came to work at noon. In the typesetting department he met a typesetter, a young communist leaguer.

"Kolya, come by the proofreader's room," he said to him.

The typesetter did not answer anything, but in fifteen minutes he appeared in the small room where the proofreader worked.

"This has to be typeset rapidly."

"Yes, sir," said the young man in a military manner and quickly vanished.

Kolya was an ardent counter-revolutionary by his convictions as well as an ardent young communist leaguer – also by his convictions. It is hard to tell how these two contradictory views of life coexisted in him, but he believed in the programmed Komsomol's<sup>3</sup> truth... and fought against the programmed communist reality. He was a wonderful conspirator, honest, and firm. He could not betray in any conditions, he would bear tortures but would not say a word.

At the end of the working day on Tuesday he came to the proofreader's room and put a fresh printed copy on the table for proofreading.

"We have to leave in half an hour so check it quickly. Maybe, I'll finish it today."

There was not much proofreading and Kolya came by the proofreader's room one more time and said:

"The typesetting would be in the typesetting room in the "to sort out," box so you don't have to carry it. Well written about this stakhanovshchina!

In the evening, the proofreader called the neighboring town:

"Victor Ivanovich, my wife asked your spouse to come over today by all means. She got some kind of extraordinary new thing, she wants to boast about it."

"If it's something new, we'll have to toast for it. Then I also come with a small bottle."

"Too bad, I am at work and can't be home..."

"It's even better. I like the company of beautiful women, but can't stand strange men."

"But, I am not a stranger?"

"Well, well, I'll come only after the shift, at ten-thirty..."

At night the proofreader came to an agreement with the printer.

"This form has to be done fast."

"How much circulation?"

"You know, there are about three thousand workers at the factory."

The printer scratched the back of his head.

"I won't finish before one or one-thirty in the morning... How about the newspaper?"

"I can delay it, I'll wind "the horses," it'll last till morning..."

At two o'clock in the morning the page designer, a member of the party, started carrying slips of the newspaper's typesetting to the printing shop. The printer stopped the machine and took out the forms. While the page designer was inputting the typesetting, the printer cut the forms in the book binding department.

He packed "The Proclamation to the Workers," took the package to the proofreading room, and threw it under the sofa.

In the shadow of a big tree, hiding from a bright nightlight, there was "a loving couple" across from the printing house. They were so happy that they seemed oblivious to the whole world. He hugged her, kissed her, and whispered something softly...

Suddenly a window opened in the printing house. "The lovers" looked in all directions. Silence. The night filled all the town with slumber. All around neither a soul nor sound. The man quietly came to the window, caught the package that was thrown to him, and the "lovers" disappeared...

From early morning on Thursday the whole factory and the town were drowning in leaflets. At first, this did not have any impression on "the vigilant eye." "Proletarian of all countries..." had a calming effect on the *enkavedists*,<sup>4</sup> but later, when the town became acquainted with the proclamation, furious wolfhounds mobilized all the members of the party and proceeded to gather them everywhere.

As a result, the general meeting, where the workers had to "voluntarily ask" for an increase of the level of production and a decrease on the wage rates, was wrecked. "An earthquake," as the workers described it, has begun in the factory: the *enkavedists* indiscriminately grabbed workers as well as technical-engineering employees but no culprits were arrested.

Stakhanovshchina was implemented from the top. While the workers were not

content with this new backbreaking system, they were morally satisfied and felt themselves as victors, "We didn't vote for stakhanovshchina!"

Of course, in a local newspaper an article was published in which obscurantists wrote about the enthusiasm with which the workers started working under stakhanov's plan. But it was just one article. Nothing else was written about stakhanovshchina.

The *enkavedists* understood well that they had to look for the culprits of the typographically printed proclamations in printing houses. These searches were started at the same time with a pogrom in the factory...

On Friday night the proofreader was sitting in his proofreader's room and was hunting for "fleas" – incidentally left out mistakes. When the hour hand of the clock was approaching three in the morning he heard people's voices reaching his room together with the noise of printing machines. In several minutes, strangers started coming into the proofreader's room. There were about thirty five – forty people. They quickly filled up the room, talking among themselves without stopping. The proofreader raised his head and in astonishment looked over those who came in. Among them were the editor and *gorlit* – the censor. Almost all who came in were in laymen's clothes except for two or three who had People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs' uniforms.

"Are you comrade proofreader?" addressed him one of the "higher ups."

"Yes, I am."

"How many years have you been working here?"

"One and a half years."

"Are you familiar with the fonts of your printing house?"

"Primarily those that are used for newspapers."

"If I gave you a printed page, could you tell if it was printed in your printing house or another place?"

"If it is a regular newspaper or book font, then it's impossible to establish where it was printed because all the printing houses of USSR use the same fonts."

"Then, how can it be found out?"

"Paper, maybe...Headings fonts...In general, one needs to see the prints. Any little thing could help."

"Is it possible to know if this was printed on the machine or manually?"

"This I can always identify," the voice of the page designer, the party member, was heard.

"And what do you think?"

"A bad printer with an automatic machine can do a worse job than an expert on the handfed printing press."

The interrogator showed a carefully torn off piece of paper.

"Do you think this could have been printed in your printing house?"

"Yes, of course, it could. It's a common newspaper font. But it also could have been printed in a different printing house."

"Is it a machine printing?"

"It could be, or maybe, manual... You see over here: '*...skaya*' – the font is crooked, didn't align... this can't happen with machine printing."

The page designer made his way to the proofreader.

"Indeed, it's crooked, this is not a machine printing, I know it well, I've worked in typography for thirty five years," he said proudly.

“Could you tell where this font is from?”  
“Do you have the title? Or perhaps the whole printed page?”  
The interrogator hesitated.  
“No... you see... you have to figure it out as is.”  
“I can’t make guesses. We have this font and the other printing houses have it too...”  
“Tell me, how well do you protect the fonts in your printing house?”  
“It’s impossible to hide anything from your own thief.”  
“How can you protect a font so that it’s guaranteed that it doesn’t disappear from the printing house?”  
“Search everyone before leaving the printing house.”  
“It’s impossible,” editor injected, “There are two hundred workers...”  
“It has to be implemented,” interrupted the interrogator.  
“But we’ll talk about it in a different place,” said one of the engravers and the crowd started leaving.  
When everyone left, Gorlit, who stayed there to read a free newspaper print, began explaining:  
“In the S. factory were found the leaflets. The counter-revolution started somewhere. They go around but can’t find anything.”  
“What do we have to do with this? In S. factory leaflets were found and we have to be responsible?”  
“You see, comrade proofreader, S. factory isn’t that far from us.”  
“If you think about it, those leaflets could have been sent from Moscow.”  
“What do you think, it could be possible. There are many saboteurs in those People’s Commissariats.”  
“Probably the censor gave the approval?”  
“This I didn’t notice, only ‘Proletarian of All Countries....’ was in the right place, in the front!”

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Of course, people “of the high rank” did not find anything, they did not go further than the “earthquake” in the factory, as a result of which disappeared thirty workers and mechanical-engineering employees.

There was not any kind of organization. They were like-minded people; among them was the young communist leaguer-typesetter Kolya. And the others – good friends and coworkers – all non-party people: Victor Ivanovich and his wife, proofreader, printer, and workers from the S. factory. Aren’t there enough like-minded people in USSR? Subtract six million of the party members and one and half million of zealous young communist leaguers – the rest are like-minded people but they are disunited, not organized in any kind of party, however, still fighting against Bolsheviks.

People fought, fight, and will fight against Bolsheviks until the regime of constraint is destroyed. People did not argue and do not argue as to what Russia is going to be, but they use every opportunity to fight for her liberation.

## Curiosity Is a Sin

After his graduation from a teachers' technical school, the young communist leaguer Sanko was sent by the Komsomol – the local Young Communists' organization – to work at the local city newspaper. The editor assigned him to the section of culture and society.

Sanko was as curious as a three-year-old child. The question "why?" was always ready to roll off his tongue. He read continually and broadly. Tolstoy and Pushkin, Turgenev and Shchedrin, Chekhov and Gogol intertwined with the "History of Communist Party of Soviet Union (Bolsheviks);" the faces of the book-heroes loomed before his eyes – Rudin and Vronsky, Onegin and Khlestakov, Bazarov and Iudushka. Millions of questions appeared in his fair-haired head and got lost in the dreary life of the newspaper's office.

But curiosity got its own way. Always carrying a volume of the latest publication and a notebook speckled with his student-like handwriting, Sanko walked from one department to another, peeking in the editor's office, the secretary's, quietly opening the door of the literary editor or coming down to the printing department and gently knocking at the proofreader's door.

"Why?" was always his first word when he met any person not occupied with work at that moment. But what could tell him the uneducated officials, who were all Communist Party members? What explanation could be provided by the editor, whom life forced only once to take a book in his hand, and this book was the "famous" History of the Party?!

The young man could find satisfaction only in the proofreader's office or at the literary editor's. But these people were always so busy that only rarely he got a chance to talk to them.

The officials took a dislike to the young communist leaguer. He exposed their ignorance too often. And that was a very touchy place for all Party officials.

Sanko became such a nuisance that the editor could not stand him any longer. One day this "leader" calls the manager of the production department Kolodny and says:

"Are you aware of that Sanko, who carries out an ideological counter-revolution? We need to write a note to the NKVD,<sup>1</sup> and let them check."

The manager of the production department had a lot of experience in regards to writing such notes and, naturally, immediately agreed to "catch the enemy of the people."

The editor's office was locked from the inside. Everyone knew that this happens only on special occasions when the editorial was being written or some confidential talks were being held. Because this was not the day to write the editorial, the employees decided that something secret was going on behind the felt-lined editor's doors. Everyone was tip-toeing around and whispering, and the non-executive personnel were pondering about their destiny.

The "case" was concocted within an hour and a half. That night the young

communist leaguer was arrested.

Eight months have passed. Everyone forgot about the disappeared Sanko. His place was now occupied by a “trusted” party member.

One night, during the newspaper pagination that was then performed by the manager of the production department Kolodny, the out-of-breath and agitated editor rushed in.

“Comrade Kolodny, tomorrow we are going to the regional center in regard to Sanko’s case. Prepare the documentation for the trial...”

The editor disappeared, but Kolodny, wound up about the coming trial, absentmindedly followed the pagination, which, as ill would have it, was especially difficult that day.

It was obvious that the law-mongers were losing their ground, which had seemed so solid before and now had slipped away; and their thoughts were preoccupied only with the issue of getting out of that morass into which they had floundered themselves due to their own stupidity.

After two days the “wardens of the Party purity” returned home. They were set on not leaving their offices, but those who had the opportunity to see them, got a very unpleasant impression. Both of them looked like stray dogs. Pitiful and humiliated, they spoke softly, did not argue, and agreed with everything. Where did their arrogance and self-importance go; where was their stature as officials and Party members?!

A week after that, Sanko appeared in the newspaper office. With his yellow-gray skin, big brown eyes that became dull in the dungeons of the NKVD and full of sorrow from the endured suffering, he walked slowly and quietly along the long corridors. The news of his arrival spread in moments all over the office, but not a single person allowed herself to spare more than a cold and brief hello, quickly passing by.

The editor knew what the Young Communist leaguer wanted. Being well aware that neither he nor the department managers could see Sanko, the editor summoned a non-Party member, the technical secretary, and in a tone of pained and insulted man asked him to call Sanko into his office and tell him not to have any hope of getting a job in the newspaper office.

The secretary called for the Young Communist leaguer.

“You probably want to get your job back?”

“Yes, I want to clear my name completely, to prove that the editor and Kolodny are not just stupid, but also cruel and heartless.”

Realizing that the direct rejection might only boost the young man’s persistence and thus worsen his situation, in general and in the city, the secretary decided to sway him in a different direction.

“This is a wonderful idea, but my honest advice to you is to take a rest from the recent past, regain your strength and health, and then submit appeal to your local Young Communists’ organization...”

“I am not a young communist leaguer any more!” Sanko almost cried out. “They don’t want me there anymore... but I, myself, don’t want to anymore... it’s enough!..”

“Look at yourself,” the secretary continued, “you don’t look like a human being.”

“I have been thinking about it... I don’t feel myself strong enough after... You know what that was...”

Sanko had always been frank with the secretary, who, in a fatherly way, used to



explain the simple but unintelligible things that emerged from the even lines of the neatly bound books. The secretary knew about his trust; Sanko felt a friendly disposition, and this is why the issue that had seemed to the editor so complicated, was settled by the secretary almost immediately.

“You should go to the village, to rest there, breathe the fresh air, drink some fresh milk, regain your strength, and then you will see.”

“Yes, you are right. I need to regain my strength. I will probably do just that...”

He extended his hand for a friendly handshake to the secretary and left, leaving a foul “cadaverous” smell that all those, who return to the relative freedom due to a miracle or an incredible will power, emit...

## Comrade Zhivodyerov

One would think that the life of a citizen who has a Communist Party card in the “Esesera” (as the common people called derisively USSR) is a constant picnic. And it is true – it would be hard to say that a citizen with such card is dangling somewhere at the bottom of the totem pole. He is, undoubtedly, in the vanguard, ahead of all party-less trash—in leadership at work, has access to the special closed party distributor store, has a nice apartment, and good paycheck, and has a travel package to a resort to maintain his excellent health—in other words, has plenty of advantages to enhance the lofty position of such individual. In addition, if such a person is a juggling expert and can follow the general central government’s lead—the most die-hard party members would envy him. However, it would be a mistake to think that even the most skillful obscurantisms in this category, with all their dexterity, with all their genial attitudes of chameleons, could be guaranteed free from the surprises of non-Party mocker-fate.

Here is comrade Zhivodyerov. Like a lady, pleasant in all aspects, he had tremendous success in the society of Party card members and was even an Assistant to comrade Cherny—the python of the N’s town department of NKVD, the People’s Commissariat of the Internal Affairs.

It is clear to anyone that such a person missed only the milk of the bullfinch or maybe of the pine siskin. Otherwise, he really had enough of everything, including the blood of the Russian people! And his career was unstoppable, too. The python comrade Cherny was not liked by his superiors, they were saying his last name is black and dreary, but for “the enemies of the people” are needed even scarier description. Who would his replacement be, if not comrade Zhivodyerov?! Thus the position of responsibility began to show up on the red horizon.

Everything in comrade Zhivodyerov’s life was smooth and well set up, so he never thought of stumbling and kept his eyes not only on his district but even at Moscow, thinking, “Being the Internal Affairs Commissar is a cake walk! In a Stakhanovite manner send to the firing squad or concentration camps!” Only the most unfortunate thing happened to him. And that with all his promising prospects. The bright sun was shining, in a cloudless sky there was not even one tiny cloudlet, the air was fresh and crisp, but the thunder struck anyway.

The python himself, comrade Cherny, called him into his office, showed a paper from the district and announced, with an unpleasant smile, “You are removed, comrade Zhivodyerov from the Internal Affairs by order from the top!”

Comrade Zhivodyerov thought that it was a setup by python himself and drove to the district office.

The district’s python had a hot temper, but he conducted questioning in a condescending manner, “Your mother, comrade Zhivodyerov, where is she living?”

“Living or not, at the present time, I am not sure, but she lived in the Polish Empire.”

“And is the Polish Empire, in its roots, is a socialist or a capitalist country?”

"From the fundamentals of Communism it is known that it is capitalist."

"And have you received a letter from your mother in such and such year?"

"I have, not even trying to convince you otherwise, but it was the first and the last letter because I personally wrote and told her to stop any communication with me."

"In other words, you had communication with a capitalist country?"

Comrade Zhivodyerov didn't respond – from his own experience he knew that further conversation would only lead to turning off his shining red star, not just temporarily, but forever. So he came back home with nothing.

At home he was thinking, "This whole thing is completely wrong. I will work at this. I will write the whole truth to the Internal Affairs Commissar personally."

So he wrote, showed it around in the city Party Headquarters and sent it off personally. While the proceedings were taking place, the city Party Office sent Comrade Zhivodyerov to manage the theater, appointing him as a theatre director.

It is boring, of course, to manage art. You are looking at that pathetic stage with people acting silly on it. And they are called actors! Totally different spirit at NKVD! Bring someone in for interrogation—everything is natural—tears, and blood, and broken bones and soul wrenching screams, for those who had a soul.

Comrade Zhivodyerov waited patiently, managed the theatre, watched the performances in the front row or in the VIP box and drank beer during the intermissions. Finally the reply came: "It could be possible to maintain service in NKVD only in the territory of Siberia. Operations manager. (Signature unreadable.)"

"Incorrect decision in its roots," thought comrade Zhivodyerov and decided to write to the very top, personally, to the dearest Leader. He gathered all of his revolutionary merits, added solid arguments and sent it off.

He waited for the reply as patiently as before, still managed the theatre, shopped at the closed, party member's only store, until... he disappeared.

And one would think that the life of a Party member is so easy!

## Criminals

The stonemason Yakovlyev was known not only in the town of Slavyansk, but throughout the surrounding towns from the pre-revolutionary times when free enterprise was a way of doing business in the old Russia. Whenever any building was begun someone immediately remarked, "What about the stonework?" The reply invariably was, "That's a job for Yakovlyev." Someone else would confirm it, "Of course, Yakovlyev could do that."

Poor Yakovlyev often found it difficult to get rid of important callers. "Filip Filipovich, I cannot do it. I am already up to my ears in work and I have not enough workmen to do it all," he would say to some townsman wanting to build a small stone house, or to some manager of a factory whose owner suddenly wished to enlarge his buildings. "Get the Postnikovs or Semenikhins," he would suggest, "They are good craftsmen. I can recommend them."

"Yes, master Yakovlyev," the customer would reply, "but the Postnikovs are inclined to be a little slipshod in their work, and the Semenikhins are really stovemakers and not stonemasons. Look, I will even add five kopecks more for..."

"Not even for fifty kopecks more, Filip Filipovich," Yakovlyev would answer. "I have contracts for the whole season. Once I have promised to do the work, I keep my word." Filip Filipovich would argue and argue with Yakovlyev, but in the end he had to employ the Postnikovs or the Semenikhins because Yakovlyev's word was final.

Yakovlyev lived with his family quite comfortably. He had built himself a good and convenient stone house; in the winter it was warm and in the summer cool. He had a workshop, not large but efficient. His workmen were all keen, hard workers. He was a good judge of men and took care in choosing his workers. If he considered that they would be useful to him, he would employ and train them, but, if not, he would not take them on, and he never made a mistake. When the First World War began in 1914, he had fewer workers because some were called up by the army; but when the revolution came, he was left without any hands.

Brown-haired, wiry and little, Yakovlyev was full of fiery energy. He did not walk—he positively skipped along and ran. Work seemed mere child's play to him—he did everything easily and swiftly. It was this attitude that kept him from becoming downhearted; when he had no more men in his workshop, he put all his hopes in his own skillful hands. Now he worked harder than ever, not so often for money, but for the goods he could obtain in exchange for his work—here, for a wheat-grower, there for a miller, and, elsewhere, for the pork butcher.

In 1918 he reached his fiftieth year but his energy was in no way diminished. As for work, there was never any lack of that; indeed, there was enough to do to last a lifetime, if he wanted it. "Why worry?" thought Yakovlyev. "If I can't get any workmen at present for my workshop, then I must just teach my sons the skills. In the summer they will finish their schooling; then they shall go to work with me".

Spring came early that year. It was warm and dry. In April the Bolsheviks began to

escape from the town. The Germans pressed on. They were seeking their *lebensraum*<sup>1</sup> in the black earth steppes of Southern Russia, the Ukraine. As the front line came near, the Reds who were in power in Slavyansk at that time put up a show of defending the town and engaged in a small fight. It was not really a battle, they fired a few rounds at the Germans, who attacked three times stronger with running fire and then entered the town without opposition.

Three or four days after the battle, Oscar Kristoforovich Metzger, a professor of German at the Men's Lyceum who had been appointed by the German commandant to be his interpreter, came running to Yakovlyev. He remembered that ten years ago Yakovlyev had built a small house for him on one of the central streets.

"Master Yakovlyev, you are requested to go to the commandant's headquarters; it is very important."

"Well," thought Yakovlyev, "the commandant has asked me to come, I must obey him, since he is now in command here". However, he got ready unwillingly, since he had already started to work.

The commandant spoke Russian with the same accent as Mister Metzger, "Master Yakovlyev, two German soldiers have been killed and buried. I want you to make a tombstone for their grave. I will pay you in German money."

Yakovlyev thought, "How could I refuse to make it?" And answered, "I can do it, of course. As regards payment, that is as you shall please, Commandant."

"You need not worry, master Yakovlyev," replied Commandant, "you can trust the word of a German officer."

The professor showed Yakovlyev where the German soldiers were buried. Yakovlyev fetched his two sons to help him and set to work on the tombstone. The younger son Nikolka, who was only twelve years old, helped by running errands, but the elder son was able to assist his father like a real apprentice craftsman.

At the end of the week the tombstone was ready and the stonemason Yakovlyev was paid for his work with German reichsmarks. The Germans didn't require him to do anything further for them; he continued quietly working for the townsmen and sometimes went to a village to earn bread for the winter. The Germans didn't remain in town for very long and Yakovlyev could never spend their money.

In the following years governments changed very quickly, but finally the Soviet government established itself. Throughout this time practically nothing changed in Yakovlyev's life, except that the Bolsheviks evicted him from his own house and from the workshop because he was considered to be a businessman. He continued to work independently, although the Soviets tried to make him join a Soviet Workers' Brigade, and then some sort of a builders' union. But he always gave the same answer, "I have never been accustomed to work under anyone and I am too old to start now."

After eighteen years, that is to say in 1936 or 1937, when he was sixty-eight, the stonemason was arrested by the NKVD and held for questioning. The interrogator asked him, "In 1918, was it you who made a memorial tombstone for the two German soldiers who had been killed?"

"Yes, I did," answered Yakovlyev without hesitation or any suspicion that it could incriminate him.

"With whom did you work?" continued the interrogator.

"With my two sons," replied Yakovlyev, "but they were just teenagers then."

"You are wicked man," accused the NKVD interrogator and specified more clearly, "You are a counterrevolutionary and a fascist sympathizer."

Then, the NKVD agents abused poor Yakovlyev for a couple of hours with violent accusations, which the NKVD used in these cases, either to satisfy their sadistic pleasure in taunting their victims, or to convince themselves and the accused that he was really guilty. After two hours his two sons, who by now were grown men, joined Yakovlyev in his cell and they wondered why they had been arrested.

In the morning Yakovlyev's daughter came hurrying to the NKVD headquarters to find out why her father and two brothers had been arrested.

"You!" screamed the NKVD agent. "Why are you trying to defend your father?! It would have been better for him if he had not made the tombstones for the fascists. In any case, this is not a court case. No accusations will be made and there will be no trial. There was no need for you to come here; the matter will be arranged by the NKVD without your interference." And the young woman was ordered to go home.

And the matter was indeed arranged by the NKVD! After about six months she and her mother received a short note in a worn out envelope stamped: "Passed by censor." In it was written only, "Send us warm underclothes, socks and coats, and also some garlic." That was all. She and her mother mailed the package, but they never found out if their loved ones had received it because no more letters came from them.

People who knew Yakovlyev and his sons wondered: "What was their crime?" "Why did they really arrest them?" "Why were they banished?" For those whose minds are normal, it is not possible to fathom the psychology of murderers and perverted political psychopaths torturing the innocent stonemasons.

Yakovlyev's whole life was an open book to the people of the town. He was religious, hardworking, honorable. He led a blameless life, neither drank, nor smoke, never cheated or overcharged, and he never killed a man. Is it conceivable that the tombstone made by him eighteen years before for the two German soldiers killed in an open battle could be a proof that he was the enemy of the Soviet authorities? Did the making of that stone constitute a crime? One would not think so; rather, it would seem that to render a last service to an enemy honorably slain in a battle is a duty one owes even to the conquered.

But, perhaps the sixty-eight-year-old Yakovlyev really was the enemy of Stalin himself. It is possible that such people as this elderly stonemason and his sons might unite to make a grandiose tombstone to crush the life of the communist gang and even refuse money for their work. Perhaps the mad cowardice of the Bolshevik party leaders, who saw enemies even among themselves, had taught the Cains of the NKVD, the interrogators and the executioners, to foresee, when they dug their bloody hands into the past of the Soviet citizens that they might find a future enemy of the regime.

This is very possible, and it is not very difficult to believe; after all, Stalin had many enemies not only among the simple citizens, but also among his closest associates, and the NKVD executioners could become tomorrow's enemies, as did many predecessors before them. Violent, treacherous, and terrible is the history of the Communist Bolshevik Party and its dictatorship.

Life was very difficult for a man under the Soviet rule. No one could foresee what thread in his past the NKVD would seize hold of and, by winding it into a great ball, use it to destroy him as a "counterrevolutionary" or "enemy of the people," which in the Soviet

system was equal to “criminal.”

Even in the midst of the most strenuous efforts of his working day and during restful sleep at night, many ordinary and law-abiding Soviet citizens are subconsciously going over their past, examining the most secret corners of their personal life:

“In 1918, a German soldier gave me a cigar...”

“In 1919, the Whites commandeered my horse and cart...”

“One Haidamak<sup>2</sup> came to my door and got water to drink...”

“In 1922, my daughter was christened...”

“I courted Tanya, who was a clergyman’s daughter...”

“Are any of my relatives living abroad?..”

“Last year, I am afraid I didn’t subscribe enough to the governmental bonds...”

“I encountered Ivanovich and talked to him on the street, and before the revolution he was...”

“The secretary of the Communist Party looked very strangely at me yesterday...”

A million troubling thoughts, and at night there was also the strained listening. The sound of the automobile... “Did it stop nearby? Are the footsteps nearing our door? Have ‘they’ come for me?”

Lord, preserve and deliver the people of Russia.

## Brothers

Alexander had barely recovered from a membranous pneumonia when he came down with typhus, which was ravaging Russia in those terrible years. For six weeks, everything around him seemed like a dream—the doctors, his mother, his brother Alexey; it was winter already when he woke up with an excruciating headache and fever.

In mid-December the doctor permitted him to get up for the first time. He rose and, with his legs hardly obeying him, managed to walk to the window, to see his Kanatnaya Street, all snow-bound. He had an uncanny feeling. It seemed like yesterday, on a warm autumn afternoon, that he went to bed—and now, in the morning, there was all that snow! Beyond Kanatnaya, one could see the trees of the town garden, their boughs bent with the weight of the snow. Jackdaws were fluttering from one branch to another, shaking off fluffy white clumps. It would be a pleasure to walk around through the mild frost, except that the legs felt so alien and disobedient, urging one to go back to the warm comfort of the bed.

"Now, that's enough for you, Sashen'ka," his mother said solicitously calling him by a diminutive nickname, "do not exert yourself, take a rest... Maybe you'd want a newspaper to read?.."

"Yes, give me a newspaper, Mama—I've no notion, with this sickness of mine, what's going on in the town, let alone in Russia."

"Ah, Sashen'ka, what's going on... God forbid..."

"Retreating?" the son pricked up his ears (became alert).

"Lord save us, we've gone through a scary time before, and it looks like we'll have to again."

Alexander started reading with avidity. The communiqué was not comforting: there was a retreat everywhere on the front line.

"So that is how it is, Mama?"

"Sure enough, Sashen'ka—at night time, one can see the artillery flashes reflecting in the sky already... and far, far away hear the rumble."

"And in the town?"

"A turmoil. Not just the military, ordinary people are fleeing too, not knowing even where."

The university then, was lost for him, but also lost was the dream, cherished through his gymnasium<sup>1</sup> school years, to join as a volunteer the White army and defend Russia from the savage hordes of a new Genghis Khan.

A week after his first walk through his room, his former classmates started to drop in, now wearing military uniforms, to pay him a visit and a farewell, maybe forever. Almost the whole eighth grade passed through his room, even the proud Prince Abashidze dropped in for a minute.

"Sashen'ka, my friend, we shall come back yet," he said reassuringly in parting. And in another week, a savage horde rolled into the hushed town, and then it started... Arrests, searches, executions, deportations, daylight robbery legalized by the new



authorities, and... trade—some chaotic sequence of events, mixed with blood and wailing, a struggle for a slice of bread and fear for one's next night.

Amidst the confusion on one side and the savage abandon on the other, new signs were appearing on the streets, with intricate names of new institutions whose cryptic character frightened the uninitiated inhabitants. But one had to eat, and the town dwellers began to turn into... workers—as if none of them had worked before the advent of the Soviet power. They started to acquire jobs, through the labor exchange in various gubsovnarkhoz's,<sup>2</sup> uchkprodkollegia's,<sup>3</sup> gubnarobraz's,<sup>4</sup> and they discovered that all those offices are filled with their own kind of people. Except that all those Ivan Petrovich's and Maria Ivanovna's had been driven out into the street by hunger earlier, from the first days of the worker-peasant era, and were already receiving their rations, consisting of hot water stewed on salt fish, with an occasional grain of wheat here and there.

At last Alexander got stronger and obtained, through the work exchange, a position of a clerk in the gubzemotdel, the province land department. And his brother Alexey, having torn off the tabs and the bright buttons from his school uniform, pulled over his head a cap with ear-flaps and continued going to school—the unified proletarian Soviet school, which was not in his old gymnasium school building, but in the Mariinskaya female gymnasium, where male and female gymnasium students now sat side by side. To be sure, the classes had been reduced in numbers because many had managed to flee the town, but after the merger of the two schools this loss was not very noticeable.

Alexander sat in his office, scribbled his papers, and followed, his mind preoccupied with, the events in the South. Hope was reviving—out of the tiny Crimea, a small but redoubtable heroic force was surging; and from the west, the Poles were pressing.

And Alexey, coming home from school, chanted the new ditties, one of which, an especially ugly and stupid one, ended with the refrain: "All the barons we shall thrash..." His mother remained silent. She was afraid to say even a word to her younger son now. But Alexander, tired of hearing this ditty, remarked once to his brother, "Stop singing such foolish songs, Alexey."

"What, are you joining the counter-revolution now?" Alexey snapped back—and Alexander, like his mother, fell silent, knowing that a single imprudent word could cause great calamities.

The year, nineteen hundred and twenty, was ending, and the hopes for Russia's resurrection were receding with it. The White Army was defeated and had boarded the ships that took it away from home shores.

Several years passed. Alexey graduated from his proletarian school, having learned nothing there, then served out his military service term in the navy, and now, with a Party card in his pocket, fluttered from one factory position to the next, working now as a Party cell secretary in one factory, as a trade union committee secretary in another factory. He had learned to thunder against "capitalist sharks" and to unite the proletariat of the whole world. Meanwhile Alexander successfully graduated from an agricultural institute, which was located far away, in Kryepost, in the building of the former Alexeevskaya female gymnasium. The brothers seldom met, though they lived in the same house, in the same apartment, and belonged to the same family.

Alexander was leaving for his institute when his brother was still asleep, and Alexey was returning home late, when Sashen'ka was already asleep.

But one time, on a rest-day—designated by the Labor Commissariat—both brothers were at home. After breakfast, Alexey announced to his mother, “Mother, clean up a room for me and put your double bed there... I am marrying... The wife will come here today.”

Alexander was outraged by his brother's rudeness, but he restrained himself.

“Who is she, Alyosha?” the mother asked timidly using his nickname.

“Valentina Ivanovna Sergeeva... Do you know her?”

“No, Alyosha, how should I know any of your friends... Well, what about the wedding?”

“Have you gone crazy, old woman? Wedding! Ha-ha-ha...”

“If only your late father knew that...”

“The late father was an idiot!”

Alexander could not bear it any more. Enraged, he jumped up, grabbed his brother's neck, and rasped, grinding his teeth, his hand squeezing the brother's throat, “One more word and I'll strangle you, you scoundrel! How dare you speak that way of your dead father?! How dare you treat your mother like that?! And who's that you're marrying? A ‘wench’ who has passed through ten other dirty hands? That's ‘free love’ for you? It is a pigsty!

The tall, lean, prematurely gray Elizaveta Pavlovna kept imploring her eldest son,

“Sashen'ka, let him go, release him, for God's sake, he does not know what he's doing... Do not destroy a Christian soul...”

But Alexander demanded, “Apologize to your mother, ask forgiveness from your late father, then I'll let you go; if not – I'll perish myself, but I won't spare your life!”

Alexey hissed, “S-s-r-ry,” and ran out in a panic.

“What have you done, Sashen'ka, he will hound us down now. He and the authorities...”

“Never mind, Mama, let him try!”

“They'll come and arrest us, and after that they'll torment us to death, it won't take long.”

“What for?”

“I have no idea what for...”

“Look. Mama, father was just a clerk for the Eliseyevs, the timber merchants. He had nothing of his own except this tiny house. Until now they don't arrest for this. Then the war started, he was drafted into the army as many others. He laid down his life somewhere far away on the river Vistula, and there is no fault in this. You know all of it very well, I am just repeating it so that you'd remember what to answer ‘there’ if, God forbid, you have to.

“I can't forget, Sashen'ka, I know it all... I am only afraid of Alyosha... He's become so alien...”

“Do not be afraid, Mommy, better you show him your authority as his mother.”

“Oh no, my friend Sashen'ka. As soon as he enters the house, fear makes me lose all my words...”

“Never mind, Mama, I'll graduate soon, then we'll live differently.”

“As long as Alexey does not spoil something for you...” “Not to worry, Mama, only

my diploma thesis remains, and then – to work. And he'd still be ashamed to do anything. His conscience is alive so far."

After that day, the brothers stopped meeting completely. Alexey did not risk bringing his "wife" into the house, even though his mother prepared the room for him and brought in her bed.

A month later, Alexander submitted his diploma thesis, and in the fall got an appointment as the agronomist in the state farm named "The Red October" in the neighboring region. His mother preferred not to leave her family house, and so her elder son left alone for his yet unknown position to start his new life there.

The state farm director was a certain Semyon Efimovich Kozarenko, an old Party member, a former partisan, and a petty tyrant. Even in the regional land department—the *oblzemotdel*—they spoke of him as a "Party man through and through," which implied a hostility towards all non-members of the Party.

As for the state farm, there they all referred to him by the mocking name of Zyuzuk. His reception of Alexander was rude and unfriendly.

"I expect you know which way wheat grows, with its roots upwards or sideways?"

"I suppose I'll learn that as I work here, comrade Kozarenko," the young agronomist replied.

"And your papa, what was he, an officer in the tzarist army?"

"He got to be a sergeant major, and had a St. George medal," Glukhov answered straightforwardly.

"So, he tried hard for his blessed father the Tzar?" asked the director ironically.

"Probably you, too, tried hard in those times, comrade director?" asked the agronomist boldly.

"Now there... do not get into what doesn't concern you, pal. You better go and get acquainted with the farm."

Alexander immersed himself in his work and forgot all else, including himself—there was no time even to eat or sleep. The state farm was large, almost all the workers were migrants from far away, everything had to be organized anew and made to work. Meanwhile the office drudgery was crushing—every day one had to prepare and urgently send yard-long reports to the regional land department! By the time when all the numbers are ready and all the percentages calculated, the time for sleep has come and gone.

Alexander Ivanovich had kept exhausting himself in this fashion for two years when he received a letter from his mother. The poor woman could not endure it any more and was asking him to take her away from her beloved nest. Alexey, she was writing, is changing his "wives" twice a year, and life with them has become intolerable.

Alexander managed to get a day off, arrived at his native home and could not recognize it—everywhere was garbage, filth and chaos. The smell of cheap perfume, torn female stockings, dirty underwear, spilled face powder, windows opaque with dust and fly specks. His mother, hiding in her little room, her face drenched with tears, was listening to the "alien world around," the obscene shouting, battery or drunken orgies... All she could do was to tremble and to pray...

"Mommy, dearest, how can you live here? Why did not you write before?"

"I kept hoping, Sashen'ka, that Alyosha would settle down... but it kept getting worse instead. Let us just leave quickly now, before he comes back, or his new one..."

how I could call her... she's not a wife to him, you understand..."

Alexander helped his mother pack, and in an hour they left the little house.

At the state farm, his mother could rest. The pure steppe air and the healthful food revived her strength, and the calm of the vast yellow fields restored her vigor and hope.

Alexey, returning home from his work, read a short note in his mother's soft handwriting telling him that "Sashen'ka took me to his state farm for a visit" and thought: "Well, so what! Maybe the old woman will really be better off there and here, nobody will restrain me." And he let himself go even more.

Alexander hardly ever talked about Alexey with his mother.

Only once did he ask, "And where is my brother working now?"

"In the GPU, Sashen'ka, it is just terrible what's going on with him."

Their life went along peacefully and quietly. The son spent the whole day traversing the vast fields in a droshky,<sup>5</sup> and his mother kept their dwelling comfortable for her beloved Sashen'ka and tinkered around in the kitchen. Fortunately, it was a good year and food rations were sufficient.

The hot time of harvest was approaching. The grain was ripening, not a day was to be lost. The mowing had to be performed as a shock work, so as not to lose a single grain. The regional land department had calculated the required grain delivery in such a way that even in this good year, the state farm could clear its account with the government only by depriving itself of its own funds. Glukhov knew that, he knew that in the winter both the workers and the farm animals would be undernourished – but to fail to fulfill the plan would be to become a "wrecker," guilty of sabotage, and to perish somewhere in far-off taiga. That is why he kept supervising, with great intensity, the fields, the machines, the farm animals, personally checking the work of tractors and combines, every day inspecting the horses and the oxen, feeling full satisfaction from his work. Everything was in order, the harvest could be expected to go perfectly.

At last, his great day came. Like a commander-in-chief, he issued the order a day before, "Tomorrow at four in the morning everybody must be at their plots; I will direct the harvesting."

Glukhov was afraid to trust his aides and team leaders, while Zyuziyuk did not get involved, assuming that the new agronomist could do it all better than anyone else. Anyway, he seldom went out in the fields, mostly he sat in his private office, sending out reports and talking on the phone.

The Don steppes are wide and spacious, shining with heavy golden wheat-ears; water-meadows glisten with fresh greenery; and there, behind them, Don itself is rolling its deep abundant waters towards Rostov, into the Azov Sea. Only the human life around the Don became different—there are fewer Cossacks, their stanitsas<sup>6</sup> are less populous, some are empty and abandoned. Part of the Cossacks went abroad back in nineteen hundred and twenty, part were dispossessed as kulaks and driven away from where they had lived for centuries... New people moved in, hungry and silent, looking as if they had already experienced the "happy" collective farm life... Everybody worked, driven by both fear and conscience—by fear, because no one wanted to be branded as a wrecker, by conscience, because Russian people cannot work otherwise.

The mechanical mowing-machines cut rapidly into endless wheat fields, and a shining stream of fresh grain poured from the combines. The young agronomist felt joy

going to and inspecting all the plots—everywhere work was going without a hitch. “Maybe we’ll manage to make this year’s winter less hungry,” Glukhov was thinking, “One feels so sorry for the people and for the cattle.”

For three days, the work was flowing smoothly and rapidly, like Don’s cool waters. Every morning, before sunrise, the agronomist scribbled reports. To Zyuziyuk about the harvest’s progress, and the director passed them on to *oblzemotdel*.

On the fourth day, early, he was sitting as usual in the director’s office and writing the next report. Suddenly a team leader from a far-off plot rushed in, “Alexander Ivanovich, a breakdown. The combine won’t go...”

Glukhov abandoned the report, sent out for the mechanic, and, having forgotten his visor-cap on the director’s desk, hurried away to the plot. The mechanic got there soon after him. They inspected the combine, but did not find any problem. The mechanic got in to try and started the machine. It worked perfectly. Everybody felt relieved—the combine driver, new to his job, had merely failed to start the complicated device. When returning to the state farm office the annoyed Glukhov was thinking, “Three hours of standing idle. And there’s really no one to blame. Inexperienced people, new to that kind of machine.”

Zyuziyuk was also getting up early these days. He, too, had enough work to do—send out the reports, organize the “red transport” delivering the grain. He entered his office. The office cleaning woman was almost done wiping the dust on his desk.. It was from her that he learned about the breakdown. He was in a beastly rage and ordered to send immediately for Reznikov, the *partorg* – the Party organizer. “Wreckers infiltration,” he was thinking, “we must check all the personnel. Let Reznikov get on with this. I have the reports and the red transport on my hand, not a free minute... I might get in trouble, too, with the regional Party committee over this.”

Alarmed by these thoughts, he sat down to deal with his report, and his gaze accidentally settled on the white plaster bust of Lenin, standing across on the shelf.

“What? They have covered comrade Lenin with a visor-cap?” He jumped up as if stung by something, rushed to the shelf to remove the cap and then decided immediately, “When the partorg comes here, let him see for himself who and what is the agronomist Glukhov.”

The partorg arrived in a few minutes.

“Have a look at that, comrade Reznikov,” said Zyuziyuk, showing him the visor-cap covered bust of Lenin.

The partorg did not get it at first, “So what? That’s the agronomist’s cap...”

“I know it’s his, look where it is! You understand, covering Lenin with a cap?!”

“Right on, counter-revolution! I’ve been telling you for a long time, comrade Kozarenko, Glukhov is not ‘our’ man. That’s why you have breakdowns...”

“Write to the GPU,<sup>7</sup> urgently.”

They locked up the office. Writing denunciations was among Reznikov’s favorite pastimes. Combining, in a masterly manner, “counter-revolution,” “sabotage,” “wrecking” with the breakdown of combine, about which he had only just learned from the cleaning woman sent by Zyuziyuk to fetch him, he filled out, in his bold sprawling handwriting, two large pages of writing paper, and went himself, with the red transport, to the regional center.

It was all finished when Glukhov came back.

"Semyon Efimovich, I have to apologize for being late with this report..."

"What about the breakdown?" barked the director, not taking his eyes from the unfinished report.

"No breakdown, the combiner Gorelkin just failed to start the engine. He is new, inexperienced."

"And who will answer for the idle time, me?"

"If you're afraid, I'll answer for it."

"You will answer for it all right," the director responded in the same harsh tone, and went to the door. "Finish the report, have it ready by eight," he flung these words at the agronomist from the threshold, adding some indistinguishable curse, and left.

The agronomist paid no attention to the threat, as for his boss's rudeness, he was long accustomed to it.

Having finished the report, he rose from the director's desk and saw his visor-cap on the bust of Lenin.

"What the devil is that?" he thought.

"Who could have pulled my cap over such a 'holy' object? Maybe that is what's irking Zyuzuk?" But he did not think of anything worse than that, put on his cap, and, mounting the droshki, rushed to the plots of land where work was in full swing.

He came home tired, late in the evening, and after supper with his mother, went straight to bed.

At midnight, a car drove up to his cottage. Two men in uniform went up the wooden stairs, and listening to the silence of the sleeping state farm, softly knocked at the door.

The agronomist was awake already. The noise of the arriving car engine woke him up at once, and he wondered who could be driving it and where. By the engine sound he already knew that the car does not belong to the state farm, but it remained a puzzle: what kind of "guests" could have visited the far-off state farm? Hearing the knocking, he came up to the door calmly enough and asked, "Who's there?"

An unknown voice answered him with a question, "Does the agronomist Glukhov live here?"

"Yes, it's me..."

"Open up, I am a representative of the regional GPU..."

The surprised Glukhov opened the door and lit up the kerosene lamp.

"We must conduct a search at your house..."

"Very well, but allow me to wake my mother..."

"Yes, go and do it."

In a minute, Alexander returned, followed by Elizaveta Pavlovna, who was trembling with fear.

The agents quickly inspected the modest interior, rummaged through the books on the little bookshelf and the desk drawers. And not finding anything objectionable, they started reading the agronomist's lecture notes he wrote as a student. Convinced that in the common words about wheat, oats, beets and sunflowers there was no counter-revolution, they told Glukhov to follow them. "You are under arrest," one of them said. "Dress up quickly, we're going to the *oblgpu*," the other added.

The agronomist dressed, threw a parting glance to his mother, wanted to come up to her, kiss her and reassure, but received a dry warning, "No ceremonies, get out!"

"Don't worry, Mama," he managed to say firmly, and turned to the exit.

Only when they all left, Elizaveta Pavlovna allowed herself to cry. A relentless thought haunted her till morning, "Sashen'ka will perish! What for? He can never be any kind of criminal! What could they accuse him of?"

In the morning, the assistant manager came in and announced, "Semyon Efimovich has ordered you to leave the state farm immediately."

Elizaveta Pavlovna was not even thinking to remain here, among these alien and hostile people, all these executives and Party members, her son's former subordinates who had concealed their real attitude towards him under the mask of silence or flattery. The accountant Lagunov, who had been affable just yesterday, and the friendly mechanic Shablyko, and this same assistant manager Starikov, all turned out today to be remote and indifferent...

She took nothing from her son's apartment. Inconspicuously she left the state farm by an overgrown path, and went on foot to the nearest railway station, which was about ten kilometers away. She arrived to her town in the evening. She was glad it was dark already—nobody would see her tears. And she might find Alexey at home.

Here is Kanatnaya Street, here is the familiar little house. Light is passing through the closed shutters. Elizaveta Pavlovna knocked. The door was opened by Alexey's current "wife", unfamiliar to her. Her son was not at home.

"I am Alyosha's mother," she said, entering the apartment; the dirt and the disorder of it struck her at the first glance, but her grief chased these needless thoughts away.

"I know, I know, Alexey told me, time and again, about his mother," the wench babbled without a greeting. "So, the feeding at the state farm is not so great?"

"The food is fine, but I need to see Alexey."

"He must be back pretty soon, because he is working only till eight o'clock. So will you stay the night here?"

"Where else would I go? By the way, what is your name?"

"Olimpiada Kapitonovna. Such a stupid name my parents invented for me, one does not know what to do with it! Alexey says names can be changed, so I sit here sometimes comparing names; all the old one—I don't like, and they did not yet come up with the new ones."

Elizaveta Pavlovna was in no mood for conversation, Olimpiada felt it, and glancing at last, under the light of the lamp, at Alexey's mother, she saw her eyes, red from weeping, thought, "Maybe something bad has happened?" but did not ask, and offered instead, "Would you like to rest after the road, I can prepare a room for you..."

"Yes, Olimpiada Kapitonovna, I am tired..."

Olimpiada went out, but Elizaveta Pavlovna had no time to wipe tears welling in her eyes before she heard a familiar knock and went to open the door to her son.

"Mama, you're back?" asked Alexey, surprised.

"Alyoshen'ka, they took Sashen'ka this night!" his mother whispered.

"Sasha? What for?"

"I do not know, darling... They came at night, searched everything and took him away with them."

"Well, let's go to the room... Did you say anything to my wife?"

"No..."

"Good enough. Do not tell her anything... She'll not understand anyway... and she has a loose tongue..."

When they entered the room, Olimpiada was already sitting in the chair, polishing her nails.

"Will your mother remain with us here, Alyosha?" she asked without interrupting what she was doing.

"Of course she will, she just went to my brother for a time, I told you all about it... And you, Mommy, better go rest, we'll talk tomorrow," he addressed his mother.

Elizaveta Pavlovna felt that Alexey was not quite lost to her as a son: that was attested both by the way he was treating her, and by his caution concerning his brother. While going to bed, she was thinking that maybe Alexey will be able somehow to help Sashen'ka: "After all, he's employed in this terrible GPU."

Only near dawn did Elizaveta Pavlovna manage to sleep for about an hour, but then she was awakened by an unexpected silence that reminded her of the state farm.

On the bedside table, she found a note from Alexey: "Today I'll try to find everything about Sasha. Alyosha."

She got up. There was nobody in the house by this time. To get her mind away from her troubles, she started tidying up...

The news brought by his mother shocked Alexey and reawakened the affection for his brother that was rooted in his childhood.

He knew Alexander well enough, he knew him to be incapable of "wrecking activities" or "counter-revolution," but he also knew that GPU could always get a confession by means of threats or torture.

Along with his love for his brother, another feeling had awakened in him—the simple feeling that is called humanity; and his whole way of life suddenly seemed repulsive to him—his "wives," and his GPU uniform, and the GPU itself.

"Alexander has got to be saved. He cannot be guilty!" he was thinking, while entering the town department of the GPU.

"Comrade Glukhov, to the chief immediately," the guard on duty told him, while he was going up the stairs.

Alexey felt a tension.

"Glukhov, this packet must be delivered urgently to the chief of *oblgpu* but personally, you understand?

"Yes, comrade Chief," replied Alexey, in the military style.

"Take a car and go at once."

Glukhov was glad of this mission, it was extremely opportune and it gave him an occasion to meet the very official he needed, while arranging for such a meeting in any other way could be impossible.

At noon, he was already in *oblgpu*. The inscription "Personally" on the packet worked magic. Alexey was immediately led into the chief's office. He delivered the packet and was awaiting the receipt, standing at attention near the large desk, behind which the chief was sitting. When the latter handed him the receipt, Alexey boldly addressed him, "I have a personal matter for you, comrade Chief."

The well-fed man at the desk glanced at the courier, "Well, what do you have to tell me?" And he thought, "This must be why they've sent him to me.... Those personal matters!"



"Last night my brother was arrested."

The chief narrowed his eyes, "Your brother? What's the name?"

"Glukhov..."

"I don't know, have not heard of him yet."

"I am sure he is not guilty, this is all a misunderstanding or an error."

"Oh yes, they all say that, Glukhov."

"I would like to help you to get at the truth of the matter, not just help my brother to justify himself. I know, comrade Chief, how confessions are obtained."

"Very well, let us look into the 'case' now." And he dialed a number on his telephone. "Comrade Orlov, have you received Glukhov's 'case'?.. Send it over to me now."

Having laid down the receiver, he addressed Alexey again, "So you say you are certain of his innocence?"

"Yes, comrade Chief."

"And if you're mistaken?"

"It cannot be true, I can believe no 'case', comrade Chief." insisted Alexey.

"And if it is true?"

"I'll be responsible, along with him" escaped from the lips of Alexey, whose conviction in his brother's innocence was growing more and more.

Orlov, the investigator, brought in the "case" and the chief began to read so far a single piece of paper, signed by the state farm director and the Party organizer.

"Eh-eh, Glukhov! There you go, getting excited for no reason—it looks like you'll have to be locked along with your brother, since you yourself have insisted on that!"

"It can't be true," Alexey flared, "This is impossible comrade Chief!"

"Get this: a combine breakdown during the harvest, the loss of grain to the state in the hundreds of kilograms, the forthcoming combine repair—that is extra money from the state's pocket—and what about a visor-cap mounted on the head of Lenin?! What do you think? The state farm director and the party secretary are untrustworthy? If we did not trust them, who else would you wish us to trust? Your brother? And you, too, are out of place, working here. Here we need people with clean hands, without a single spot..."

"Comrade Chief, all this may be a mistake, I want to get to the truth of the matter myself..."

"How do you expect to get around to it?"

"Allow me to meet my brother for a few minutes."

"A meeting?"

"Yes, comrade Chief, just for a few minutes."

"And then?"

"And then I'll go to the state farm and try to ascertain everything in place."

"How many years have you been working in the GPU?"

"Five years, comrade Chief."

"Have you had any reprimands?"

"Never."

"What has your father been doing before the Revolution?"

"I do not remember my father, he was killed in the war."

"Officer?"

"No, comrade Chief, a soldier."

"And how did he make his living?"

"He worked as a clerk for a merchant."

"Had he any property?"

"A little house, the same I am living in now."

"And was your mother from eparchy school?"

"A grammar school."

"What relatives or acquaintances do you have abroad?"

"No one, where would I get anyone of that kind?"

"You just answer the question!"

"None, comrade Chief."

The well-fed man lifted the telephone receiver again, "Comrade Orlov, send prisoner Glukhov here."

When the agronomist came in, the Chief warned, "No sentimental babble."

Without greeting his brother, Alexey asked, "Alexander, what's that combine breakdown?"

"There was no breakdown at all, the rookie driver failed to start the engine, the mechanic and I came at once, and the machine worked."

"How much grain is lost?"

"Not a gram. They caught up with the production in my presence, they ended that workday by moonlight."

"And your visor-cap?"

"Yes, that surprised me, too..."

"Did you do it?"

"No, Alexey, you know yourself..."

"Enough," the chief interrupted, "Comrade Orlov, take the prisoner away."

After the investigator left with the agronomist, the Chief addressed Alexey, "So? Do you believe all this rubbish? I am not so easy to fool, Glukhov. But I'll give you one last opportunity, I won't forbid you to go to the state farm."

"Thank you, comrade Chief, but now I am even more certain that my brother is arrested through some misunderstanding or..."

"Give me the proof... You're working in the GPU, so I am making a concession to you, but first of all, prove it!"

Alexey took leave of the chief, jumped into the car and urged the driver, "Hurry up, Vanya, to the state farm 'Red October!'"

An hour later he was sitting in Kozarenko's office and conducting the interrogation.

The director did not know the GPU agent's name and fearfully addressed him as "Comrade Chief."

"On the twenty second of this month, you entered the office at five in the morning?"

"Yes, comrade Chief."

"Did you find the agronomist there?"

"No, he went to the breakdown site."

"What breakdown?"

"Well, it was not, properly speaking, a breakdown – all would have been fine, but our combine driver..."

Glukhov was quickly writing down every spoken word.

"So, there was no breakdown?"

"No, comrade Chief..."

"What is the grain loss from the idle time?"

"Well, our agronomist has made up for all that, he's an energetic fellow..."

"And who has put the visor-cap on Lenin?"

"I don't really know..."

"What do you mean, don't know? Didn't you write?..."

"That's not me, the Secretary wrote it."

"But you have signed it?"

"I did not read it all that carefully. With all the work, how can one pay attention to all such trifles?"

"And if somebody had laid down a denunciation against yourself before you, would you have signed that, too?"

Director got embarrassed, "Well, you see, comrade Chief, I trusted the secretary of the Party organization..."

"Very well, then, when you came in, the cap was already on Lenin's head, and the agronomist was in the field? Who else has been in your office?"

"Nobody, comrade Chief, just myself..."

"Consequently, if the agronomist did not put it there, then the director did?"

Kozarenko did not expect such a twist, "Maybe the office cleaning woman has been here?"

"Call her in at once."

"Nastya!" the director called loudly and the not very numerous clerical staff of the state farm understood, by Zyuzuk's voice, that he was being "stewed."

A middle-aged woman came in, greeted Alexey, and asked calmly, "What do you need from Nastya?"

Alexey looked at her and saw a kind face, meek eyes, and he thought, "Her eyes have the same expression as Mother's." He realized that the middle-aged woman standing before him had no understanding that anything serious had happened and no idea why she was called into the director's office where she was coming only to clean up or do minor errands. Now, too, she has apparently come in with the expectation that she'd be sent out either to the kitchen or to the garden, the places where the director had often sent her when various visitors arrived.

Alexey started interviewing her, addressing her simply by her first name, "Nastya. when was it that you had here that combine breakdown?"

"It must be two or three days ago, citizen..."

"When did you come into the office that day?"

"Oh, my dear, these days we begin working before sunrise."

"Who else was with you in the office then?"

"Alexander Ivanych, our agronomist, was sitting here in the office writing something."

"And who else?"

"Just me, when I came in..."

"Was there anybody else?"

"Just Alexander Ivanych, our agronomist, but he is two days gone now, he and his

mother..."

"That means that only you and the agronomist were in this office?"

"Only us..."

"The agronomist was writing, and what were you doing?"

"Sweeping the floor at first, out there in the outer office, and then, when the team leader ran in for Alexander Ivanovich, then I started cleaning the director's office..."

"What did you clean here?"

"Our cleaning is always the same, you know: I swept the floor, then I dusted..."

"And the agronomist had left in his cap?"

"Well, not the cap, he forgot that on the desk, I remember that well because, when I was beginning to dust his desk (she pointed at Kozarenko with a nod), I hung the cap over there, on Lenin, so that it would not get in the way of comrade director..."

"That is all, Nastya, thank you. Can you write?"

"Yes, sure, I can read and write."

Alexey was writing down the last words, while he curtly ordered the director, "Get the partorg."

Zyuziyuk personally ran out into the outer office and sent the accountant for the Party secretary."

When Reznikov came, Glukhov read aloud everything he had heard from Kozarenko and Nastya. The office-cleaning woman confirmed, "Yes, yes, citizen, it's all just as I said it..."

The director and the Party secretary were perplexed, but they felt tongue-tied in the presence of a uniformed GPU agent.

"Is this correct?" asked Alexey.

"Well, we got a bit carried away, comrade Reznikov and I," the director admitted, and he was the first to sign the investigation report.

Reznikov signed it in silence, and Nastya, biting the end of her tongue as little children do when writing, drew the letters, "Nastasya Kolesnikova."

Alexey knew that his superior, having sent him out to the regional center, will not think of him till tomorrow, that is why he boldly sent his car back to the regional office. On his way, he was somehow thinking of Nastya. He did not doubt her naiveté, but how could he convince the oblgpu chief?

Glukhov's morning visit was not forgotten yet, and he had no trouble getting through to the chief's office.

"My brother is not guilty," he declared triumphantly, opening the briefcase in which the report had traveled.

"Who then – the director, the partorg?"

"No, comrade chief, just rural darkness, peasant ignorance."

"Oh that rural darkness! Kulaks hide in dark places, shielding their activities under the appearance of ignorance. And you, too, Glukhov?"

"But you can believe there are such things as ignorance and stupidity?"

"They, too, can bear deeper investigation. You're still young, Glukhov, and are idealizing some things. That does not befit a Communist, still less a GPU agent."

"I am looking at life facts straightforwardly, comrade Chief."

"You better show me what you've brought there."

Glukhov delivered the report to him. The chief looked at the signatures first of all.

"Ah-ah, the director and the partorg have signed?! And who is this Nastasya Kolesnikova?"

"The state farm's office cleaning woman... She is tidying the office..."

"They needed her signature, too? Is she a Party member?"

"No."

"Is she from a poor family? Or 'serednyachka'?"<sup>8</sup>

"Poor, comrade Chief."

Glukhov saw a smile appearing on the chief's fat face as he was reading.

"What dumbbells, and to think that the region is proud of such a state farm! But wait, Glukhov, this Kolesnikova is still the one who pulled that cap over Lenin?"

"Comrade Chief, believe me that Kolesnikova is a very ignorant woman."

"But she is still writing herself."

"Her writing is not the problem, her head is, comrade Chief... You should have seen her.. a downtrodden village creature. And her writing, too, doesn't speak for her culture... She is as naïve as a child, comrade Chief, believe me..."

"We will check this, comrade Glukhov. One cannot just simply say such things."

"But my brother is not at fault?"

"That much is clear now..."

"And Kolesnikova is naïve..."

"To the point of being stupid?"

"Yes, comrade Chief, that's exactly right."

"We'll check it, Glukhov, we'll check it."

"I give you my word as a chekist<sup>9</sup> that there was no design in what she did. Who would dare to do it, anyway, in the director's office where almost nobody comes?!"

The chief thought a little more, then decisively took the telephone receiver.

"Comrade Orlov, bring the Glukhov case here."

In a few minutes, the folder with the case of the agronomist Glukhov was lying on his desk. He looked at the signatures and raised the receiver again. The invisible threads of telephone wires securely connected him with the state farm "Red October." From the other end of the telephone line, the nervous Kozarenko was castigating both himself and the partorg.

"Well, and Kolesnikova?"

"A dumb wench, comrade chief!"

"You don't think, Kozarenko, that she did it on purpose?"

"No, comrade Chief, just from stupidity..."

"Well, Glukhov, you're lucky," said the director, putting down the receiver. "They are all idiots out there, you can go home."

"And what about my brother?"

"What, you want to take him with you?"

"And what is he to do here?"

"Y-y-e-es!" the chief drawled vaguely.

"Haven't you made certain now that my brother's case is nothing but a silly mistake?"

The chief took the agronomist's case, tore it to pieces and ordered Orlov, "Let the agronomist out."

Alexey thanked the chief and left the office, feeling profoundly satisfied. In half

an hour, he and Alexander were rushing down the dusty road to their hometown.

The wall of misunderstanding and alienation that had grown between them, crashed down in one moment. The brothers traveled as old friends. Alexey gave a funny imitation of Zyzyuk and the confused partorg. Alexander was asking him about their mother and about his life. The travel time passed unnoticed. The sun had not set yet when the driver brought the car to the town and stopped it in Kanatnaya Street, near the familiar little house.

"And you'll see Mama right away," Alexey said, opening the door for his brother.

Elizaveta Pavlovna was happy – her Sashen'ka was free! But that was not the only reason of her joy. She saw that Alexey had changed, had become different with respect to his brother and to herself. A warm feeling of love and tenderness appeared in him, such as only an uncorrupted person can experience.

Olimpiada was somehow shifted to the background by the events. She was clearly displeased with Alexey, but kept her silence, waiting to see the outcome of this "family convention" as she called, to herself, this unexpected arrival of Alexey's mother and his brother, and she even used that expression once when speaking with Alexey. He understood her sarcasm, but did not say then anything in response. A boundary was beginning to form between them, dividing their feelings and interests.

On the next day upon his return from the regional center, Alexey returned to work, and Alexander traveled to the state farm, leaving his mother at home.

The incident with the combine breakdown and the agronomist's visor-cap on Lenin's head was not over. It was already known, both in the town where Alexey was working and in the region. Oblzemotdel had immediately sent a new agronomist to the state farm, because the busy time of fieldwork required a constant presence of a specialist; therefore, when Alexander came to his workplace, his position had been filled. There was nobody to talk to, because the director was now traversing the plots himself, to introduce the new agronomist to the harvest and, having learned of Glukhov's arrival, he avoided appearing in the office at all. Alexander talked to the oblzemotdel from the state farm. His superiors there were surprised to learn that he is at large, but refused to reinstate him in his previous position—whether there was or wasn't anything in his case, so they reasoned, once a man has been arrested by the GPU, it was "unseemly to leave him in his old place of work," his reputation was already soiled. No matter how Glukhov was trying to convince them, even when he explained that the oblGPU chief himself tore up his case, regional land department's senior agronomist, Kalyanov, a Party member, just repeated his "no." He suggested Glukhov should return to his hometown, where "they seem to have an agronomist position in the town land department, the." There was nothing to be done. Alexander went home and, indeed, received an *gorzemotdel* appointment, though the work was not that of an agronomist but something between a clerk and a statistician. He was, of course, shocked and offended by this, and he was going to refuse, but when he shared that with his brother, Alexey told him, "Grab, Sasha, anything they give you and thank your destiny... And I'll soon be bounced, so it seems."

"Bounced, what do you mean?"

"They'll throw me out from the GPU."

"What for?"

"For my brother having been arrested by the GPU."

"Because of me?"

"Because of the GPU."

"I don't get it."

"It is all quite simple, Alexander. People who work 'there' must all be absolutely clean, without a 'dust mote'... And I have that dust mote now..."

"That's, me?"

"Doesn't matter who."

"Are you sad?"

"Not really sad, but there's no justice in this."

"And for me?"

"For you, too. But you are fortunate that you did not have to undergo interrogations... It is good that everything went so fast..."

Alexander had heard a lot about tortures in the GPU and he asked: "Do they torture 'there'?"

"I cannot speak about that, Sasha... But anyway, I was not admitted to interrogations... I was mostly employed as a courier... or doing routine 'on duty' work. I almost never met with the 'enemies.'"

The older brother understood the reason why Alexey could not speak of it; but if there had been no tortures, he would surely have said so.

Alexander took his brother's advice and went to work again in the same place where he had worked as a clerk before he began to attend the agricultural institute. His work duties, even now, were not all that different from those of a clerk, but he restrained himself, obediently calculating percentages, putting together reports and explanatory notes.

About ten days after the events, Alexey came to work. As soon as he sat down at his little desk, he heard a phone ring. He took the receiver.

"Glukhov, is that you?" sounded a rude voice of his superior.

"It's me, comrade Chief..."

"Come over to me right now."

Alexey went to the office of the town's most feared man.

"Glukhov, you'll have to say good-bye to us."

"How is that?" Alexey did not understand at first.

"Just like this. Leave your uniform, your weapon—you are dismissed."

"Why?"

"You cannot work here any more."

"Why?"

"Don't you understand?"

"Of course I don't, comrade chief. Nothing happened that I know of that would give you the reason to dismiss me."

"With you, almost nothing happened, as for your brother, about whom, by the way, you've said nothing to me..."

"But he is free!"

"After having been in the oblgpu?"

"Yes, but he hasn't been charged with anything, there's even no case..."

"All this is not so simple, Glukhov, as it seems to you. Your brother's imprisonment in the GPU is known in the town and in the region. This is sufficient for people to point to you, and that means, to the whole of GPU, saying 'Look who is

working there!”

“But my brother is quite clean...”

“That doesn’t matter. What matters is that you are not clean anymore, but are soiled by your clean brother who had been arrested by the GPU... Proletarian justice must be done with absolutely clean hands.”

“Drenched with flowing blood,” Alexey thought, but he asked, “Can your decision be appealed?”

“The region won’t help you; as for Moscow... you can try. But you must know already that in an affair such as this one, Moscow will be on our side.”

“So?”

“I don’t advise it. As a Party member, you can still find a fitting work. Apply at the town Party committee. But as for making an appeal—is not worth it. This spot will be on you for your whole life. Never forget it...”

“Well, comrade Chief, it seems that justice is not always just...”

“Especially when it is divulged,” the old chekist added, “But you know, that you should not wag your tongue...”

Glukhov left the office and immediately called the town health department where his “wife” was employed as a typist.

“Come home immediately. There’ll be an urgent and serious talk,” he told her, and laid down the receiver without listening to her questions.

In an hour, he was sitting at home, waiting for Olimpiada. His mother was fortunately not at home. He was glad of that. When Olimpiada entered the room, Alexey announced with no preliminaries or explanations, “Get your things right away and leave at once.”

“What, have you switched me for your relatives?”

“That is none of your business. Get out of here, quickly.”

Olimpiada had parted with her “husbands” before.

She was only afraid of public scandals because they could spoil the reputation of a “decent woman”; as for parting with Alexey, she had been prepared for that. Silently, she stuffed a suitcase with her crumpled dresses, stockings and cosmetic objects, all her treasures that she had brought into this house with her, while thinking about which man she will now be living with—the manager of the town health department, or the inspector of the town financial department, both of whom had claims for her “love.”

Having closed the suitcase, she turned towards Alexey.

“So, then farewell, comrade Glukhov.”

Alexey silently pointed to the door. Olimpiada obediently left the house.

In the evening, his mother asked, “And why is Olimpiada Kapitonovna still not here? It is getting a bit late...”

“She won’t come any more, Mommy. That’s finished. I am fed up with all that... It is too dirty... I’ve sunk low... into filth... But not all the way... I want to become a man again...”

His mother sighed. One more mountain had fallen off her shoulders.

He told his brother Alexander that he is finished with the GPU.

“That dust mote has eaten me up after all, Sashen’ka... But it’s for the best – that institution was just crippling my soul. Probably everyone who looked at me was thinking, ‘Executioner!’ But I give you my word, Sasha, there’s not a drop of human blood on my



hands, I've never laid a finger on anybody!"

Alexander and his mother were quietly happy and jubilant—Alexey was becoming a son and a brother!

Next day, Alexey came to the town Party committee, to the personnel department.

"Well, comrade Glukhov; it wouldn't be proper now to appoint you to a leadership position. Find yourself a job in your professional line... What were you doing before?" asked the Party committee secretary, to whom he had been sent by the head of the personnel department.

"A secretary of Party organizations and trade union organizations in factories. This is my only qualification."

"Well, then just go into productive work. You are still young, you can get trained as a lathe operator or a metal worker. We are not expelling you from the Party yet. After you work in production for some time, and prove your worth, justify yourself, so to speak, you may gain the trust of the Party again."

"Justify? How is that? What justification can there be needed?"

"What justification? Have you been asked to leave the GPU for nothing? If they fired you, there must have been a reason?"

"No, comrade secretary, I believe there was no reason at all."

"So, comrade Glukhov, you do not only doubt, you simply do not believe the GPU chief, who has been entrusted by the Party with such an important sector of building the socialism? That would mean you do not trust the Party as a whole? Would you want us to put that question at the Bureau meeting?"

"Comrade secretary, everyone can make a mistake."

"But the Party makes no mistakes!"

Alexey realized that there was now an abyss between him and the Party. He did not deepen the disagreement that had arisen between himself and the secretary, he promised to find production work, and he left the town Party committee with a firm resolution to sever all his ties with his past life. He knew that the secretary could, at any moment, inflate this disagreement to such an extent that he would be turned into an "enemy of the people," with all the consequences that entailed.

He went to the harbor, rented a boat and rowed far out into the sea, taking his thoughts with him. The Azov sea is shallow in the bay. Alexey rowed for a long time till he got out into the open. All around was quiet and peaceful, the sunlight was shining brightly on the smooth, still sea surface, with only the regular strokes of his oars causing slow circles to spread out and disappear far away.

Many thoughts chased each other in his feverish head, till he decided, "If I break with it, I break with it completely." He took the Party card from his pocket, looked at it and thought, "The shame of my life..." On the bottom of the boat, he noticed a large metal nut with a wire. "That should do it. It won't rise from the bottom." He fastened the Party card to the weighty lump of metal, looked around him, and hurled it into the water.

"The end!"

A feeling of relief, joy, a feeling of victory over sin, over evil and injustice, victory over his own recent unclean past swept over him and turning the boat sharply, he started rowing fast towards the shore.

In the evening he told Alexander, "I am not a Party member."

"They've expelled you?"

"Now they will, without fail," and he told what he did with the Party card.

"Why did you do that? You could have simply turned it in..."

"You don't understand anything, Sashen'ka. To turn in the card would be to declare one's disagreement with the Party line, that is, to become its open enemy. And enemies, you know, are treated without any ceremony... As it is, I can only be expelled for carelessness in the keeping of an 'important Party documents.' That will be all for now."

"But what has forced you to break with everything that you had seemed to have given your whole life to?"

"The lies, the falsity, the bloody justice. If you still believe anything here – remain silent, but do not believe it. It is comfortable in your land department, but there are tortures in the GPU basement. You just stay silent, but I can't take it any more."

At the next meeting, the Bureau of the town Party committee expelled Glukhov, as a matter of course, and a few days later Alexey left the town, to forget the past and to be himself forgotten in his native parts. A month later, he got to the shores of the Pacific Ocean and got hired as a plain sailor on a fishing vessel. Alexander remained with his mother in the little house. The rare letters of Alexey lightened up their quiet life with joy. Each night, Elizaveta Pavlovna ended her prayer with the words: "Thank you, Lord, for saving Alexey..."

## In Prison

I occupied solitary confinement cell No 7 in the district center prison. There was nothing in it besides a bucket. They gave me nothing to eat or drink. Nobody dropped in and nobody disturbed me. Since being thrown into this dimly lit chamber I'd begun to get used to the solitude, to the noisy nights and days, and was even glad that no one bothered me, though the hunger had made its presence felt.

Within two days, however, my solitude was disturbed. In the morning an accountant of the suburban state-farm was pushed into my small room, then within a short time – a demobilized Red Army man-collective farm worker, then – a construction engineer, after him – a chauffeur, next – a teacher and... by evening there were eight of us in that solitary confinement cell.

For two nights the entire floor space had belonged exclusively to me. Now it had to be shared with everyone. It was impossible for everyone to lie down along the length of the narrow chamber. We began to settle ourselves across it. Tightly pressed against one another, with the bended legs, our heads propped against opposite walls we finally, after some practice, paved ourselves across the floor.

None of us had known each other prior to cell No 7, but in here everyone became a good friend. The collective farm worker-Red Army man and the accountant from the suburban state farm even found that they had relatives in common, connecting them even closer together than with a usual acquaintance. Without the prison they may never have met each other, ever.

The early dusk disappeared quickly in the chamber. It became so dark that amidst the mass of blackness that drew over us, it became painful to see. We simply had to close our eyes so as not to experience the searing sensation of painful blindness.

After some silence in what now seemed like an unbounded void of darkness, voices began to sound out. The previous silence had offered an occasion to ponder and the new roommates had thoroughly thought through each word before stating some remark or another.

"Never repudiate prison or poverty," said the teacher.

"Could I ever think of finding myself in prison?" said the accountant. "In the past I wouldn't have known where to hide my eyes. And now, here, there's nothing to it. It's as though it has to be."

"Look, brothers", said the Red Army man-collective farm worker, "what an honor for a muzhik.<sup>1</sup> He is also the "enemy of the people."

"Oh, cut it out, brother!" said the chauffeur. "The enemies of the people walk about at liberty, and the friends – they're in prison and in the concentration camps."

"Where are the people themselves?" I asked.

"In the Kremlin", replied the construction engineer.

"That's true..." "That is correct..." came the voices from the darkness, "Right to the point..." "Spot on..." "He's hit the nail on the head..." "The enemies are all around us."

"What kind of life is this, brothers? Where are our friends?..."

We began to search for friends and arrived to the conclusion that only Stalin, Molotov had friends, and that Lenin had only one true friend. Stalin had Dzhugashvili, Molotov had Skryabin, and Lenin had Ulyanov.<sup>2</sup>

"It couldn't have been otherwise."

"And how it could be if they are ready to swallow each other?.."

It looked as though they'd forgotten about us. Our doors were locked and no one came or was interested in us. The third day of my sojourn in this solitary confinement cell, and the first since they turned it into a communal, was coming to an end. I had already gone seventy-two hours without food or water. I sensed a strange kind of lightness throughout my whole body. I remembered Upton Sinclair's "Book of Life" in which he described his voluntary fasts. The eccentric American carried them out, if my memory serves me correctly, for a hundred and fourteen days and came to the conclusion that they purified his organism. So! I have only a little more fasting to go before my organism will be purified by the method of the American writer... I recounted this to my partners in the cell. My story proved to be very interesting to them and it lifted everyone's mood somewhat.

"No, really? A hundred and fourteen?.."

"And how on earth did this American fulfill his norm of work?"

"Well, he did not work during the fasting and just listened to beautiful music."

"How else would you want it to be?" the young collective farm worker Red-Army man asked the chauffeur. 'Who does not work – does not eat.'<sup>3</sup> That, brother, is socialism for you."

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On the second day of our stay in the "solitary cell" the doors of the chamber crashed open and Chief Warder jumped in. It was noon. Lashing his whip mercilessly he began to drive us out of the small, semi-darkened space into the corridor, which had already been filled with other "criminals" as ourselves.

After all the prisoners had been evicted from the cells, Chief Warder shouted at someone in the front:

"Come on! To the top with the sons of... and... and..."

Each time he would add the longest swear words, extremely verbose and obscene.

Driving the prisoners on with his whip, Chief Warder continued to shout. We, like a herd of sheep, in the narrowness and darkness of the corridor, stepping on the feet of those in front or behind us, hurried forward with no idea of what was happening in our harshly altered lives.

A bright light at the exit blinded us, forcing us to screw up our eyes. The sun was already too bright on that hot, summer day. We stepped out into a courtyard surrounded by a tall wooden fence, in which there stood some trucks covered by tarpaulin. We were pushed along the trucks for some time not realizing that, in fact, they were intended for us. Confusion reigned, everything was so muddled, so confused that our 'Cerberuses' were not able to immediately establish order.

During this confusion I caught sight of the great *encavedist*<sup>4</sup> Chief Warder, the man upon whom our fate was hanging. I had first encountered him a few months prior to my arrest. At the time he had held the positions of NKVD agent and city literary

ensor. Not only had I been struck, but so were the party superiors in the publishing house, by nomination of him as a literary censor, a semi-literate, uneducated Chekist,<sup>5</sup> who could barely manage to sign his own name. At the publishing house he would cut out everything he considered to be military secrets, and with the stubbornness of a narrow-minded man, he would defend his decisions against the protests of the editor or the publisher, who knew as much as any literate and intellectually mature censor what could be deemed libeled for publication.

My acquaintance with this person was too brief for him to have remembered me well enough. And I hadn't been of any interest to him then, so, in all likelihood, he had not noticed me at all. I was a kind of non-party person, well, that was fair enough for him. Moreover he did not have any kind of working relationship with me. Therefore, I was not surprised when, upon seeing me among the prisoners, he did not recognize me or at least he gave the appearance that he did not know me. Yes, in the end that was understandable. To be sure, for him I was just as much of a common "enemy of the people" as the others.

Chief Warder—a skinny man of short stature, who wore enormous riding breeches made from fine cavalry cloth, boots of soft shagreen leather and a khaki service jacket with unnaturally squared and elevated shoulders—was the embodiment of evil. I could never have imagined that such a small person could contain such an enormous amount of hatred. When he looked at us "enemies of the people," his entire physiognomy became distorted with rage, his small black eyes flung out sparks of pure wrath. It seemed as though we, the inmates of the cellars and basements, were his personal enemies, as though we all had caused him some huge and irreparable misfortune for which he was now retaliating against us as much as he possibly could; with each step, he retaliated against us as much as his callous and brutal being desired.

Chief Warder was the first one who began to introduce order. With the aid of his lash he set to work herding us into the trucks. His helpers immediately began to lend a hand, very zealously and with just as much brutality. All of them were shouting, and unmercifully beating all those who, amidst the turmoil, found themselves under their hands; those who had difficulty to clamber up into the trucks or those who for a second stood in hesitation in front of the overcrowded vehicle.

Finally the vehicles were full but not everyone had managed to fit in. The remaining few flung themselves about between the trucks attempting to evade the agents, who still continued to shout and beat anyone whom they could catch. And only after Chief Warder himself was convinced that there were no free spaces in any of the trucks, only then did he command his aides to force people to fit-in. This peculiar manner of fitting-in people consisted of the agents leaping up into the truck, jumping up and down a few times on the live bodies, ramming with their rough boots on those sitting, then they leaped down onto the ground and pushing the prisoners forced them to climb up inside the jam-packed truck. No sooner had a man gone up as far as possible so that he could roll himself into the vehicle, then an agent shoved him inside with his hilt on the behind and the prisoner fell on top of his fellows.

It was awful to look at the "enemies of the people." Women, near-children, old men, or young—they had all been made submissive by a few armed agents. The prisoners who filled the trucks were stuck in the most unnatural poses, the most uncomfortable positions, silent and motionless. It was as though they were merely

things, hastily thrown in for transportation. The suffering was augmented even more because in addition to the unnaturally cramped conditions the stuffiness increased when the agents covered tightly the trucks with tarpaulin, not leaving the slightest crack. Chief Warder himself checked whether or not the trucks had been shut well enough so that none of the happy soviet citizens would be able to see their unhappy countrymen. Socialist harmony must not be disturbed by these "enemies of the people."

When the loading was complete, Chief Warder once again circled the vehicles and gave a command. Wardens with automatic rifles began to seat themselves in the vehicles. They, without ceremony, cleared a space for themselves using not only the heels of their boots, but also the butts of their automatic rifles.

But finally, Chief Warder's long set of instructions ended and we set off on our journey. Nobody knew where we were being taken. It was only when one of the vehicles broke down on the road that we realized from the conversation of our security guards that we were being taken to the regional prison.

It was a hundred and ten kilometers to the regional center. On those roads that led there it would take even a light vehicle no less than five to six hours and our trucks, which feebly spun their back tires in small puddles, which crossed the old bridges carefully, and often came to a halt because of a faulty engine, needed to travel much longer. How much longer?.. In all likelihood the chauffeurs themselves could not say for certain.

The tire of the front vehicle had split open. None had a spare. They had to carry out the repairs in the open field. The guards accompanying us climbed down. We attempted to open the tarpaulin slightly, but we paid for it dearly. Our keepers began to thrash us with their rifle butts with such diligence that we regretted starting such a bold undertaking. The guards threatened us for a long time, vowing to shoot everyone right there on the spot. If it hadn't been for the women, who were no less than half of us, then we might have even tried that the guards would carry out their threat. It was already so difficult to travel in this way and there was no way of accommodating ourselves more comfortably. Arms and legs turned to stone. It felt like we had lost them completely during the course of the journey. Our mouths had become parched from the heat and the dust. Hunger made its presence felt more and more keenly. We became indifferent to what they would do with us next. We wanted only to reach the prison a little more quickly...

By midnight, finally, we arrived at the regional center.

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Our vehicles drove for a long time along the streets of the town. In the darkness we had the opportunity to hook up the tarpaulin and see where we were being taken. Most people, as had I, supposed that the jail would be located somewhere just outside the town but everyone was astounded when we realized we were in the town center. Our vehicles rolled off the main street into a small side street and down the blind alley, then suddenly stopped near an enormous iron gate set into a large multi-story building. The senior agent accompanying us jumped out of the first vehicle, approached the gate and rang the bell. Within a few minutes someone came out.

"Why so late?"

"A breakdown on the road... We changed the wheel base..."

"Did you bring the goods?"

"We did..."

"All of them? No one ran away?"

"From us no one runs away..."

The gate slowly opened and the vehicles slowly drove inside. The large glaring electric lanterns were so bright that it would have been possible to find a needle on the slab stones of that wide courtyard.

The vehicles halted. From an open window of a close by building the striking of the Kremlin clock rang out. It was twelve. We were starting a new day in a new place.

A command sounded:

"Get out!"

Our guards, who'd jumped out of the vehicles straight away at our arrival into the yard, now approached the trucks, removed the tarpaulin and forced everyone out into the yard to stand in a line.

It was very difficult to move due to the fact that our extremities had frozen stiff during the course of the long journey, but the security guards were so zealous that our indispositions swiftly vanished, as if by magic.

When everyone was in place, the long line began to move. We saw that in a certain place up ahead the people seemed to disappear into the ground. Their quick disappearance was aided by the fact that next to this mysterious place stood two agents who thrashed anyone who lagged behind.

We reached the front of the line, still trying the whole time to keep together. Upon approaching the mysterious spot we caught sight of a sudden steep descent downwards, into the basement. We were not able yet to discern the step, as we, nudged forward by someone, fell headlong onto the stone floor. Some people were struck quite hard, but slowing down was not possible, so we immediately jumped up and directed ourselves forward after those who had already gone ahead along the narrow corridor.

We walked for a long time along the underground corridor, turning several times to the left and to the right until, finally, we approached the silently standing prisoners who had managed to reach there a little sooner than us.

After we were all assembled, a loud voice ordered those of us who managed to speak with one another to be silent.

"Put your things on the floor!" cried out the first command, then the voice became quiet for a while.

"Take a step away from the wall!" followed the second command after a short pause.

"Turn your faces to the wall!"

"Lean your head against the wall!"

"Raise your arms upwards!"

There was nothing we could do except fulfill the demands of this unfamiliar voice. When we had carried out everything that was required of us, someone from behind began to count us, striking us hard on the back.

After the counting they began dispersing us to the cells. I and my friends of misfortune found ourselves in a large room, in which there was not a single window. Only an iron railing separated us from the corridor—the kind they had in the menageries for wild beasts. There was no light in here either. It filtered towards us from the corridor.

We were actually gladdened by this situation as we supposed that the light in the corridor was never extinguished. We hoped that with the presence of some light we could accommodate ourselves more comfortably.

Besides those of us who'd met each other in the regional prison, an additional thirty people got into the chamber. We were all excited by the unexpected re-settlement and spoke loudly, imparting our experiences of the unpleasant journey, until the new superior officers arrived, bringing with them several people, among whom there were two or three women. The officers shoved these people into our chamber and threatened us:

"Stop all the talking. If you chatter – straight into the punishment cell."

None of us yet knew what the punishment cell meant, but we imagined that it wouldn't be anything especially pleasant, therefore we immediately fell silent. I, on the sly, began to tell my fellow inmates about the gymnasium punishment room which existed in those long gone years. Of course, sitting in a gymnasium punishment room would be a pleasure compared to this basement in which we found ourselves. But we had no way out; it was guarded severely by guards and we could do nothing except dream about freedom.

Situated next to us was another cage-chamber like ours, where we found some acquaintances. Was it really possible to hold out and not speak to them, to not share the stock of impressions that we acquired in such a short time? Someone quickly reacted to the sound of our restrained conversations. The light went out in an instant. We found ourselves in absolute darkness.

Somewhere faraway somebody gave a long, drawn-out groan. That terrifying groan echoed through all the twists and turns of the corridor, bouncing in and out of all the chambers, and the underground tenants immediately fell silent.

"They're beating..." whispered someone quietly in the darkness.

The groan continued, sometimes strengthening then becoming quieter. We all waited with bated breath for the torture to end, but the sounds did not stop for long enough for us to relax at all. We wanted to cry. We wanted to gnaw the heavy iron bars so we could get quickly to that awful place where they horrifyingly tortured those unfortunate people. We wished to sacrifice our own lives, if only to stop those inhuman throes of pain, those awful sounds...

Suddenly all became quiet. As though someone wanted to listen to us—to find out whether we were sleeping or if we were still talking. Satisfied that silence had enveloped the dungeons the torturers ceased their torment, but every fifteen to twenty minutes the iron bangs were heard as doors opened and closed. The metal clang got on our nerves, not allowing anyone the chance to sleep. Everyone was silent; everyone was left only with their own heavy thoughts. The first night was restless. The following nights were no better.

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It was morning, most likely. In the darkness we could not discern time of day and our watches had long since been taken from us. We heard footsteps. Several men were waking. The loathsome metal clanging told us that something was happening, but, of course, none of us could determine what that something could be.

After a long and tense wait we finally had the good fortune of first to experience



the light, and then to see the entire procession. Two security guards were walking and unlocking the chambers. Behind them two prisoners were shuffling about carrying something hot in an iron cistern, from which steam escaped. When the procession reached our cell we smelt the aroma of boiled coffee. Of course we were all very glad seeing it as most people as myself, had not eaten for several days. A third prisoner approached holding the tin mugs in his hand. Our first “breakfast” began.

With the greediness of starving people we threw ourselves towards the fluid that they were calling “coffee”. The filthy cups, which had most likely not been washed since arriving here, did not bother us. We wanted to fill our empty stomachs with something as quickly as possible, and we would probably have been able to endlessly drink the filth that they handed us from that rusty iron tank. But we only had the right to one cup and soon enough our “benefactors” disappeared. Our cell was once again shrouded in darkness and the guards did not forget to bolt it shut.

Conversations broke out between some indefinable people on some indefinable topics. More than anything all were interested to know for what reason the invisible interlocutor had been jailed. Soon it became clear that nobody knew why anyone had been put here in this underground prison. Our conversations, however, quickly ceased. Out in the corridor the lamps flared up. The security guards reappeared. They began to unlock the chambers and proceeded to throw us out into the corridor. From the corridor we were then driven up into the courtyard.

Finding ourselves in the fresh air, in the Lord’s light, it was as though we were resurrected. The yard in which we found ourselves proved to be the same kind of stone chamber as the one we’d just left. It would be impossible, under any circumstances, to escape from this courtyard. The fence was impossibly tall and the prison building itself was six floors, which you would never be able to leap over. All the rooms looking into the yard had small windows. This told us that prisoners were being held there. How many could there be? It was difficult to say insofar as the building was in the shape of the letter ‘W’, of which only a negligible part was visible to us.

We were formed into a line and ordered to undress. As there were some women among us we looked at one another in bewilderment and at our superiors, who pondered this, and the women were led away somewhere. We never saw them again.

After we’d undressed we were taken in groups of twenty-five into a small, low building built onto the fence. It appeared to be a bathhouse. We began to like the care with which the superiors were treating us, that was until one of the guards began to speak of “disinfecting” us so that we wouldn’t infect the investigators. Apparently, there had been the occasions where insects had crawled from the prisoners onto the investigators, infecting them with typhus. We were astounded that the disease had not affected the prisoners themselves, and that only the NKVD investigators had fallen sick. This information did not please anyone, to be sure, but we all bathed with great enjoyment, washing away all the dirt that had accumulated since being locked in the district prison.

Everything took place with lightning speed. We’d already had an idea of the pace, therefore we hurried without having to be urged.

After bathing we had a ravenous desire to eat. But we weren’t at home. We had to reconcile ourselves to the situation we found ourselves in there not of our own volition.

Washed, still smelling of the bath, we were sent to the first floor. There we were

lined up against the wall of the corridor and in turn we were sent into a large room. In that room some of the agents carried out a brief search, taking from us the few things that had not already been taken in the district jail, and we left there holding our trousers up with our hands, because our suspenders were now in the hands of the agents and we'd become so emaciated over the past few days that our ordinary clothes had become more and more spacious.

Nothing was left in our pockets. Even our handkerchiefs had been seized. They said that prisoners were able to hang themselves with them. When someone mentioned in passing that you could hang yourself with your underwear pants, they stripped off not only his underpants, but all of his clothes entirely, putting him completely naked in a solitary confinement. The fate of that brave person remained unknown to us.

After a careful search we were sent running to our cells. They'd carried on the search there without us. Many hadn't found much of anything after the search. Everything that some had managed to keep until now, that one had brought from home, was lost. Some people had had the "audacity" to bring some small pillows and light blankets along with them. Nobody had any of these by the end of the search. Everyone now had to sleep on the cement just as they were.

The days of waiting began. Once in twenty-four hours we were brought some kind of turbid liquid, called soup, which was mostly water rather than being anything that could alleviate our hunger. We were given such tiny pieces of bread that it was difficult to determine their weight, but in any case they did not weigh more than a hundred grams. In the morning we received the dirty warm water called "coffee" and in the evening they frequently forgot about us. Even if they did remember, it was only to tease us with the leftovers of the morning "coffee" or with the leftovers of the lunchtime soup. On this "fatty" food we began to "get well"—to look plump—to swell.

Our nights were marred by constant noise, groans, weeping. All these sounds were heard sometimes close by and sometimes they reached our ears as a far-away underground echo, chilling us to the core. But it wasn't the only thing that disturbed us. For some reason only by night, water leaked along the cemented floor, and we'd become wet. Besides that, some kind of wild animals would come running into the chamber, they would unceremoniously run on our exhausted bodies. We guessed what these four-legged creatures could be, but we tried to live side by side with them in harmony because most of us knew about their vindictive character. We could not see them in the darkness, but we often felt the long bodies of these unpleasant animals upon us, and also their long tails and sharp claws. They were covered with quite tough fur, reminding us of the repulsive creatures who should not be angered under any circumstances, and for whom we should not make any trouble because of their extraordinarily rancorous nature. They came to us only when it had fallen completely quiet, when the agonizing groans would stop, as well as the crack of a whip or the cold sounds of gunshots, which, by the way, not everyone was familiar with.

We were all overcome by the strange feeling of tranquility. Even those who were especially sensitive, even those who seemed to be stilled by what was happening, did not sense what was going on around them. We had ceased to perceive life in the same way we previously had.

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One week went by without anybody disturbing us. We were not called for questioning; nobody searched us, but by night we could hear as the prisoners were taken from the other cells somewhere and in a short time they were either walking back or were brought to neighboring cells. We understood that during the interrogation the prisoners were beaten into such a state that they lost the ability to move by themselves.

Were we afraid? No. Because all of us believed that we could not escape this ordeal in any way and that we simply had to be ready to withstand all those awful things that fate had prepared for us.

To be fair, there were a few who believed that they were beating only those who faltered, refused to speak, who didn't want to plead guilty for their crimes. It seemed to them that way until somebody asked:

"And to what, comrade, should one confess to?.."

Everyone thought it over. And it was certainly something to ponder. Nobody knew why they were here, for what they were accused by this "justice," what confession could be demanded of them.

We gradually began to hear from the prisoners who brought us coffee or broth about all the regulations; learned about the "criminals" who had never committed any crimes; learned about many things that made our hair stand on end and with trembling apprehension waited for when they would begin calling us for interrogation.

We became moles. The absolute darkness was broken only by the faint electric light at feeding time. But this time was so short that we didn't even manage to look at one another. We only just began to accustom ourselves to the meager light when it would disappear. We began to forget whether it was night or day. For us it became eternal night. And if it wasn't for the nightly interrogations and the daily arrival of food then we, in all likelihood, would have forgotten completely about the fact that darkness gives way to light; of the existence of the sun and moon; that in the nature there is always change from day to night, that calendars even existed so that people were able to somehow count days, weeks, months, years, decades...

Within a week, however, our tranquility was disturbed. An agent burst into our chamber, looking very similar to him known to us from the district prison – Chief Warden. While mercilessly beating us with his whip in the same way he began to shoo us out of our cage. There was nothing we could do, of course, except jump quicker into the corridor and wait for the events which were to follow.

In the electrically lit corridor there were already around two hundred men. They all looked at each other in bewilderment but none dared to speak this time. Was it perhaps because everything had taken place so suddenly? Was it perhaps because everyone knew that right now it was necessary to remain silent? Was it perhaps because the quietness of the dark chambers had developed a fear inside us of any violation of the established routine? It is very difficult now to give an explanation for the silence holding sway in that corridor full of people, but on every face there was simply a look of expectation—strained and agonizing.

There were only a few agents; they worked energetically, not giving anyone the chance to come to one's senses. When everyone was driven out of the cage-chambers they commanded us to move forward. This meant towards the entrance. We'd forgotten whether it was night or day. It was just as we walked towards the last door in the labyrinthine corridor that we saw daylight. As we came out into the yard we felt a

strange weakness and dizziness; our legs refused to obey us. Our eyes hurt from the incredible brightness of the light. We hardly saw anything for the first few minutes...

They put us into four rows and announced that we were heading to a concentration camp. We were told nothing about the charges against us and nothing about our sentencing. Nobody knew for how long they were being sent to the far unknown. Nobody dared to ask the NKVD agents. It almost seemed that everyone was indifferent about the future. It was quite possible that this condition could be explained by the fact that everyone knew perfectly well that any questioning could lead only to nothing good, that no one of the NKVD agents could say anything because nobody could bring an accusation against people who were thrown in the jail for no other reason than the whim of the Communist power. They say, by the way, that at that time there were so many “enemies of the people” that the “court” was not able to investigate the “crimes,” therefore they exiled them as quickly as possible without any “process” in order to free up spaces for the new “criminals.”

Standing at the ready, thirty-hundred-weight lorries swallowed us up and within a few minutes we’d left the regional center. Traveling was much more comfortable. We even had the opportunity to look at the town where right in the center, on the main street, the prison was situated. None of the town’s residents knew, or suspected, that under the ground there was another town where “criminals”—“the enemies of the people”—lived.

And were they criminals?..

Were they living?..

We were sent to the end of the world...

## Trotskyist

A go-o-od editor we had. Mikhail Ivanych was his name. I recall, as he was hiring me, he asked nothing about my papa and mama, didn't bother even with a half-word my kinfolk, and never mentioned the White Army. Such a good, such pleasant man he was. And he himself, of course, was cheerful, joyful, and healthy... And why wouldn't he be, if he was from a workers-peasants class, a party member and attached to ZER?!<sup>1</sup>

He used to come into my office, give me a friendly tap on the shoulder and ask, "Ha, ha, ha! How are you?" then turn around and leave without getting an answer. In one word a nice person.

Well, so, all of a sudden, this Mikhail Ivanych, became sad. He became so wistful and dull, that he'd silently put his signature to pass the paper for the press and disappear.

"Well", was thinking, "perhaps he has some kind of illness or family troubles? Such are the times now, unstable."

The senior secretary, Ivan Ivanych, suddenly, dropped in. He was a scoundrel. He knew everything about everybody. Yet, no one knew a thing about him. He was a slicker this one, for goodness sake, the likes of which the world has never seen. He worked in the editorial office for ten years as a senior secretary, yet not only he was not a member of the Communist party or the Komsomol – the Young Communists League – he didn't even belong to the publishers workers union! This Ivan Ivanych was an old fox!

Well, he tells me in complete confidentiality, "Mikhail Mikhalych, you know, Mikhail Ivanych is Trotskyist!"

Well I of course, made a note of it for myself, because a new editor will come and he might use the new broom... he might ask something about the White Army or my grandma.

And Mikhail Ivanych, came to the editorial office for the next two days and faded completely. His release to press on his last night was memorable one, "My last time sending paper to press. Go ahead, gang!"

The next day, of course, the new editor came. But we'll talk about him, sometime later. And Mikhail Ivanych disappeared. He disappeared in such a way, that in the editorial office the memory of him had faded away from everyone's mind – it was dangerous.

And, Ivan Ivanych, the secretary, kept me informed all the time about what was happening. I guess he was also very fond of him. And why wouldn't he be. Everybody lived comfortably under him, no nervous shocks whatsoever.

There was a Gorpartkom – Town Party Committee – in our town on the Leninskaya street, of course, exactly opposite to the NKVD – the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. In this Gorpartkom Mikhail Ivanych was interrogated to the third degree, while in the NKVD the main culprit, Trotskyist Ponomarenko, had already fully confessed.

Well, Ivan Ivanych tells me everything in confidentiality:

“Our Mikhail Ivanych is in the Gorpartkom, telling the secretary all the aspects of the case. He was planning to go to a resort. That was still last year. A trip to Kislovodsk – to cure his heart. He boards the train looking for his reserved seat. And there he sees the very same Ponomarenko, the Trotskyist sitting in the compartment. Well, back then Mikhail Ivanych did not know that besetting sin of his. ‘And what about you, you too, are going to a resort?’ he asked. ‘Yes,’ says the Trotskyist, ‘I’m on my way to Piatigorsk.’ And Mikhail Ivanych passed by because his seat was not in that compartment. No more words were exchanged between our editor and this enemy.”

At the same time in the NKVD, Ponomarenko candidly confesses, saying the exact same words about his encounter with our dear editor. The secretary of Gorpartkom calls the NKVD on the telephone, and the head of NKVD is calling the Gorpartkom. They clarify, check and verify, and clear our Mikhail Ivanych from any suspicion – all of this is slander they say, so go ahead and continue to enjoy party-soviet life.

About two month after, you know, Finland “provoked the war”. And Mikhail Ivanych was sent by Gorpartkom to the war so “he could put himself right with the party.” He went, of course, in due order “to put himself right...” As a political leader.

Well, he is on the frontline with the comrades Red Army men, and they are heroically advancing always forward and forward. Only now, they are without rifles, and their arms are up in the air. They kept walking until they disappeared behind the enemy lines. And Mikhail Ivanych stayed in the haystack until own forces came – “their own special task force” that is. Yet, he stayed in a haystack for three days. He put himself right with the party. And, even got the order of Lenin.

## Concordia

With each battle the N. city was passed from hand to hand and the battalion where Veretsky served almost always stopped at the same place; the officers and the soldiers inhabited the same quarters as during the first occupation. Everybody made acquaintances that, for the most part, had a temporary nature because the ready for action situation was not conducive to anything permanent. However, some felt seriously settled down with one of the Southern beauties and during times of calmness on the front-lines would sigh in anguish by carrying away in their dreams to cozy living-rooms of provincial beau mond.<sup>1</sup>

In one of such arrivals in N. town, Vadim Nikitin invited his friend Veretsky to visit an acquaintance of his.

"Let's go to the old Rombysh, you'll be surprised and won't regret it... You won't just pass your free time, you'll enjoy the show and conversation."

Veretsky already knew that this Rombysh had an army of daughters who were all beautiful, but he wanted to tease his friend and asked, "What kind of show is that? Is it a monkey nursery?"

"Nursery? The word might suit it well, but a monkey... you'll be a fool if you repeat such a monstrous expression after seeing these lovely beings."

"I don't think that you can be welcomed in the nursery where the heavenly beings are cultivated," grinned Veretsky, polishing his boots until they had a stupefying shine.

"You think that only you with your cute physiognomy can win the hearts of steppe's savage girls?" he asked caustically.

"No, just looking at your physiognomy makes me think that you can't go further than a monkey nursery!"

"What? You are taking me for a freak?" he asked with vexation, throwing aside his frontline English jacket and putting on another one intended for holidays. "I'll prove to you that cuteness is a sign of foolish men, just as you are. You'll be boring and useless in the wild flowers bouquet, just as a weed grass that accidentally fetched there. What? According to you I'm not a man?" he attacked Veretsky.

"You see, in our manor we had a red haired mongrel dog but its redness was dull compared to yours..."

"Women prefer the redheads, and the redheads are always happy," Vadim interrupted his friend.

"Now, look at your nose. Of course, it's a vegetable, it is useful thing when it's in its proper place but if it's situated on a face, a beautiful woman may bite it off on occasion."

"Well, it's straight nice nose... A little bit red but it's from the frontline life."

"It's an old carrot not a nose! And how about the ears? You saw the mules in Sevastopol on the Northern side where artillery barracks are? It's probably from where you inherited them! And the mouth, the mouth! Stretches to the ears, it needs strings to hold it!"

Vadim came up to Veretsky showing him his fist and threatened, "Do you see this?"

The argument was heavy but there was no reason to fight and the friend, not showing any signs of backing off said, "Force is used by those whom God shortchanged of intelligence!"

Nikitin figured out that the "argument" could completely destroy his reputation in the eyes of his friend and changed the topic right away.

"The commander said that we're staying here till evening. It seems that we're going to rest."

"Who's going to take our positions?"

"Markovtsy."<sup>2</sup>

"Well, that's not for long. Luck isn't with them lately."

"It would be nice to stay here to rest... It's small but it's still a town..."

"And has the nursery with beautiful girls," added Veretsky.

"Don't laugh, Boris. Probably, you haven't seen such beauty yet. I'm sure they will charm you not only with their appearance. Simplicity, manners... And, oh, how they sing, play instruments, are expert dancers, are smart and interesting interlocutresses. These aren't just provincial girls for a shallow flirt!"

"The girls, so to say, with a substance?"

"Yes, yes, exactly, with very rich substance. In any case you won't be bored in their company!"

"Then, let's hurry," said Veretsky and they went to the battalion commander for permission.

Lieutenant-colonel Musin-Pushkin listened to the young volunteers and asked them, smiling, "What only 'a pair of blue eyes' turned wild heads?"

"No, lieutenant-colonel, it's an old friendship, almost family," lied Vadim.

"All right, gentlemen, only keep in mind that you have only one hour at your disposal."

The young men thanked the commander, saluted, and went to Rombysh who lived not far from the battalion station.

During the short walk Nikitin cursed like a sailor, "One hour! We'll only have time to go inside the house and then begin to say goodbye! The hell with all this resting!.. And in general, why did all these Bolsheviks appeared in Russia?"

"And one hour isn't enough for you?"

"You should understand it's only one hour!"

"This is sixty minutes, three thousand and six hundred seconds, and how many moments?" Boris asked smiling.

"Moments?"

"Yes, wonderful, magical, beautiful and so on and on?"

"A beautiful word, Boris, but only the duration could be different – some moment can last the whole night and some you won't even notice as it flies away."

"Eh-e!" thought Veretsky. "My friend Vadim didn't get poetic without a reason. Probably old Rombysh has a dove who was able to win the heart of a courageous soldier!"

"Well, you know, the night is not just a moment... and why only night? Can't there be happy moments during the daytime?"



"It's a strange fact, Boris. Not once have I thought as to why all love affairs happen strictly at night."

Veretsky wanted to say that the reason for it was his ugliness but he restrained himself.

"You're deeply mistaken Vadim. As far as I remember my love adventures, all my declarations of love, all first and second kisses happened during the bright daylight."

"Could be, but look, there is Rombysh's huge house. He has five daughters that are brides age and two are coming close to it. The old man himself will introduce them all to you, and I'm afraid that this ceremony will take too much time."

A girl of about fifteen with long plaits opened the door and invited us to the terrace that faced a big old garden. The whole girls' bloom was there, headed by their joyful father. The real introduction of daughters started; however, it was not wearisome with formal manner but instead more comical in its simplicity. Vadim introduced Veretsky to the host, Stepan Stepanovich, who took Boris under his arm and led him to his oldest daughter.

"This one is a cut slice, Sasha, Alexandra Stepanovna, and already almost isn't Rombysh. She is engaged with a kornilovets.<sup>3</sup> She'll be a wonderful wife, she is experienced in sewing, cooking, knitting, and, of course, will give me a couple of wonderful grandsons as a present... Right, Sashen'ka?.."

Sashen'ka blushed and shaking Veretsky's hand said in a friendly tone, "Don't listen to Papa, he's a big joker."

"And as to your engagement?" Boris asked, smiling.

"Oh no, the wedding has been delayed only because of the war..."

"Masha, I mean, Maria Stepanovna, specimen number eight, musician and a singer. Vyal'tseva<sup>4</sup> could envy her. And in housekeeping she is as good as Sashen'ka. It seems," the old man gave a sly look at his daughter, "that she is contemplating to give her heart to a markovets."

"Papa, I'm absolutely free..."

"You're right, my daughter, in your choice but the old man's eye is observant," and addressing Veretsky, he continued, "In any case here the approach is permitted with precaution."

The young people shook hands and Boris was able to inform that probably markovtsy would come unexpectedly soon to their beautiful home. The young woman put her finger to her lips and looked to her father; the young man understood that the old man was not mistaken.

"Fenya, Feodosia Stepanovna." father continued, "She's still Rombysh today but there are some hints for a change of last name... Yury Vladimirovich, probably alekseyevets?"<sup>5</sup> he asked his daughter, taking her chin in his hand.

"O, I love him madly," she said tragically but comically while shaking Veretsky's hand. "Papa always has these vicious jokes," laughingly added the girl.

"No, Fenyechka, the young man has to know what he can count on in my house," and turning to Boris, he continued to describe his daughter. "She's an artist! Shishkov's<sup>6</sup> 'Forest' is too pale in comparison to her paintings. Oil and watercolors are equally wonderful in her tiny hands, but in the housekeeping duties she competes with the others..."

"Well, and this is Concordia Stepanovna." the old man introduced his fourth

daughter, "She's proud, cold, inaccessible! No matter how much a courageous drozdovets<sup>7</sup> try to approach her," he signaled with his eyes to Vadim, "nothing comes out, even a hurricane artillery fire doesn't produce any effect."

"Papa, do you want that a shell blows up over my head?" the beauty laughed.

"I imagine the shell in a shape of a golden heart filled with the arrows of Amour," Boris answered instead of the father.

"Yes, yes, the young man is right, I picture it like that myself... But, my dear Boris Nikolayevich, Concordia Stepanovna's talent for erudition can tire out a future husband – she's a woman-philosopher!"

"And a poetess!" added Concordia.

"Oh yes," Stepan Stepanovich thought suddenly, "she writes poems, poems! She's either Byron or Pushkin! She writes in the notebooks, on wrapping paper, on old newspapers, and even the wall-paper in her bedroom is covered with writings!"

"And what you thought, Papa, that I would run with the rhymes around the whole house and look for paper?" she smiled at her father.

"I can see that it's the drozdovets fault," said Veretsky shaking the tiny cold hand. "Instead of the arrows of Amour, first we need to give a present of a nice album for poems..."

"An album?!" Concordia Stepanovna cried disdainfully, "I'm not a bread-and-butter miss – a thick notebook doesn't last me a week and you offer an album!"

Vadim looked with embarrassment at the young woman and promised to go to town right away to buy the thickest common notebook.

"Oh no, Vadim Eliseyevich, you won't be able to buy anything in town today, and a forced present doesn't have a great value," Concordia killed with her answer the warrior in love.

A girl with plaits ran out when the father wanted to introduce her to Veretsky. Finally the daughters' introduction ceremony was over. A general discussion started. Everyone felt free, at ease, just as if everybody had known each other for a long time. However, the visiting time was limited and, to the great regret of the young women, the young men had to leave their joyful company.

When the friends left the house, Vadim asked, "Well, did you like it?"

"Wonderful girls, cheerful, they don't have anything unnatural or far-fetched, they are intelligent..."

"Concordia, my brother, is especially smart... Did you hear? Even the father emphasized it – the philosopher!.. And she is attracted to drozdovtsy..."

"Especially to the redheaded," Veretsky added, understanding that from the girl's cold hand the arrow of Amour went straight into his friend's passionate heart.

"You know what, Boris?"

"No, I don't know yet..."

"You better don't bother me. I've already told you once that the red-headed are lucky, and you'll envy me when you'll see Concordia as my wife!"

"Anyone, but certainly I would not envy this wonderful girl," Boris continued to mock.

"Why is that?"

Veretsky suddenly changed his intention to tease his friend (this was his favorite pursuit during their whole friendship) and said, "It's a war, Vadim. Now it's not the time

to get married. You see it yourself, all the Rombyshs' daughters are to-be-brides but the grooms are in a project. In a time of peace they would probably match-make even the girl with plaits that in embracement escaped from being introduced to me, because they're all really beautiful, intelligent, kind, joyful, cheerful... Who would refuse such a bride?"

"What a beautiful name, Concordia!.."

"The goddess of Accord... the daughter of Jupiter and Phemida..."

"Yes, yes," remembered Vadim, "something from history – concordat and unia... This is something Catholic... But that's not that important. The most important – the unity!"

The friends finally reached the station. In an hour and half the battalion with rhythmic step was leaving the town, marching towards the remote place to rest.

The German town hidden in the thick colonists' gardens was somnolent and boring. Vadim not only truly regretted to leave the N. town, but he, probably more than anybody else, would suffer from the dull life of the tiny town in which the battalion was going to rest. During next the two days he cursed the German colonists, the quite gardens, and the peaceful life in the rear, which, it seemed, mostly aggravated his intense emotional state. On the second day, after lunch he ran cheerily up to their apartment, "Mount!" rang out his coarsen on-the-front-line voice.

"What happened? Veretsky asked.

"Marsh-ma-arsh!" he answered, imitating the commander.

"What's going on?"

"We're going to the front line, my friend! My heart felt that we wouldn't stay long in this hole!"

"You aren't kidding?"

"Battalion, volley fire!" he cried as an answer and ran out.

Veretsky did not have to look for proof for long, because he could already see from the window of the apartment business-like movements of artillery men and the volunteer Solov'ev who ran in and passed the order to be ready for action.

Before the evening the battalion stretched as a ribbon on the road and was slowly leaving the town to join the fight in the morning.

In several days the friends were again in the N. town and the battalion commander gave them a whole day off.

Rombysh's welcomed them as their own. Everyone was happy for the Bolsheviks being driven away, and told funny and scary stories about their short control over the town. Concordia read her poems dedicated, of course, to the White rescuers; Fenya treated with her wonderful paintings of live landscapes; Mashen'ka – with music and songs. In one word, the day went by joyfully and imperceptibly. Vadim didn't leave the object of his love attack, but Veretsky saw how Concordia while talking to his red-headed friend was throwing significant glances at him. Boris liked all the girls and he tried not to favor any one of them. He decided to tame the backbiting toward his friend not wanting to interfere with his serious intentions.

In spite of all the activity in "the night moments," Vadim quickly managed to make his declaration of love to Concordia Stepanovna in the midst of general loud conversation, singing, dancing, and fun games, which led everyone got into forgetting the stern realities.

Late at night the friends said goodbye to the wonderful girls, promising to visit them on any available occasion. They walked slowly and silently for several minutes. Veretsky was waiting for when his red-headed friend would start talking. He felt that Vadim was under a confused impression from the whole day and that he needed to organize his thoughts. Finally, he cursed strongly, as usual, the “sovdepia”<sup>8</sup> and asked, “Do you think philosophy is boring?”

Boris understood that the question concerned the object of his love.

“If philosophy interferes with the human feelings, then, in my view, the life wouldn’t be that joyful. To love, then to love without philosophy! Imagine a nice lovely woman who at the moment of loving gust of passion pours at you a tub of cold philosophical reasoning about foolishness of a kiss or unnaturalness of tenderness! And why do you want to talk about philosophy after such a wonderful day?”

“You see, Boris. Defeated I sprawled in front of Concordia and told her about my love, but she started executing me with Kant. She hasn’t yet completely killed me, promising to think about it and to renew the conversation after the end of the war.”

“Sashen’ka, Mashen’ka, and Fenechka are thirsty for love and don’t put aside conversations with their love ones... They don’t wait for the end of the war... But your Concordia didn’t found yet, as you see, a knight worthy of her attention, that’s why she had fired back with philosophy.”

“You’re saying nonsense, Boris! She certainly loves me, but she hides her girlish shyness in philosophy... If I could only break this sham, but there’s no time right now...”

“Your experience with love declarations at the daylight turned out to be unsuccessful?”

“As you can see,” sadly said Vadim and stopped. “I acted stupidly, you’re right. It’s not the first time I have to regret my trying to conquer a woman’s heart at the daylight... And I promised to myself, not a word at daytime! I hurried up, to hell with it!”

“Here’s that red-heads are lucky,” added Veretsky remembering a recent conversation that brought poor Vadim to an “argument.”

“I didn’t get a refusal, Boris. The delay is only because of philosophy.”

“And the war,” interrupted his friend, “That’s all nonsense Vadim! Until the war is over, your Concordia would have time not only changing her last name but also would give a couple of lovely grandsons to the old Rombysh!”

“Well, you better leave this Boris. A serious girl wouldn’t joke with these kinds of things. If she said after the war, then have patience soldier, you’ll be a husband to a wonderful woman,” Vadim rephrased an old saying in his own manner.

The friends left for their apartments, which this time were in different places and the conversation about Concordia was not brought up again, at first, because of the battle success and then a swift retreat did not give time for respites and memories.

Before the retreat in Crimea, Veretsky was taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks. Being able to escape from the red paws, he managed to make his way to the White field camp. A sickness knocked him out at the critical moment and he lost forever his red-headed friend. Vadim managed to cast off from the native shores, but Boris was destined to live a “happy life” in his motherland.

He lived in Crimea for about five months experiencing cellars, interrogations of CheKa and the Special Department, but well fabricated documents helped him to escape being shot. The unexpected friends who supplied him with forged documents

also helped to find him a job.

During an early spring, traveling as a stowaway, Veretsky reached the N. town and decided to visit the old Rombysh. He lived now on the outskirts of the town after being bereaved of his big house, which was turned into headquarters of Special Department of Fights Against Banditry. Stepan Stepanovich was changed drastically: he had lost weight, he had a pinched face, his cheeks were sunken, his cheerfulness that before was his constant companion had vanished, and in general he had become somewhat confused. Sashen'ka, his oldest daughter, had married her kornilovets and left the house; no one knew anything about her fate. Mashen'ka and Fenechka stayed home with a silent sadness, being afraid to show their beauty on the street. Concordia rushed about with her thoughts like a beast at bay and the pain of the unresolved situation showed on all of her appearance. She was irritable with undisguised and unfeigned fury, harsh with surrounding people, and, presaging the family catastrophe, often spoke about suicide.

The spirit of the whole family was too depressing, and, although they gave Boris a warm welcome as if he was one of the closest friends, he could not bear sadness, grief, and impending misfortune reigning at the home of old, kind Rombysh, and he hurried to the train station to secretly leave the town on a night freight train. Concordia accompanied him.

Evening streets were empty. The town, it seemed, stood still in some kind of torpidity. It felt like everyone was watchfully waiting for something terrible and that the coming night was the culmination point of intense fear, morbid sleeplessness, and horrible visions.

"What?" Concordia asked when they left the house, "You cannot recognize not only us but the town as well?"

"Yes, I cannot recognize you; the towns are all the same now. The fear is even greater in Crimea, it paralyzes all people's thoughts and feelings, turns them into condemned men who are obediently waiting for the execution."

"A 'red kite' is flying over them, a 'black raven'..."

"E-he! The black raven is traveling freely in Russian cities and towns, but the kite is sitting calmly at his office not having enough time to digest his victims," Veretsky interrupted Concordia, who started to recite her poem.

"Yes, you're right, Boris Nikolayevich. I am waiting for this raven and my father is also... I don't know who's going to be first..."

"And why you? And why are you waiting? And why don't you do something to save yourself and to help to save your father? If I came to such a state of mind like you when in Crimea, I would be already dead for a long time! Now it's time to save yourself. You need to save yourself for the future. It can't be that this fight for Russia has ended! The White Army went abroad but it didn't renounce its cause and will still fight!"

"There is no point in it. It's all finished. I don't see way out... I have already retreated with you. With the White Army. I volunteered as a sister of mercy – a nurse..."

"You?"

"Yes, Boris Nikolayevich, I became a prisoner of those wild fanatics... I escaped... I wanted to reach the Black Sea... But it was too late... It seems it is my fate... You know, I also just recently arrived from Feodosia..."

"You were in Feodosia, too?"

"Yes..."

"I was also hiding there. At Karantinnaya."

"And I was hiding at Italian... It's terrible over there..."

"Yes, it's surprising that we haven't met there not even once."

"It's not surprising, absolutely not surprising because I never left my house... Only through the window I was watching every day at the march of condemned men... and was looking... for you..."

"For me?"

"Anything could have happened... But I didn't see anyone I knew..."

"Yes, yes, every day at around four or five o'clock before the end of the working day they were led to the mountains and then I heard a machine gun fire at the Karantinnaya."

"You know how many of them I counted? Fourteen hundred!"

"But the executions are continuing even today."

"It's everywhere Boris Nikolayevich, they'll continue because the animals are longing for blood."

"But it doesn't give you the right to wait obediently for your fate. You have to escape, to search where you can wait till these terrible times are over. The fight, Concordia Stepanovna, isn't over and if you want to save Russia, then first of all, you have to save yourself. If our fate is to die from the Bolsheviks' bullets then it's better to die fighting against them!"

"I don't see the possibility to fight against them. Don't you see how they fooled the masses, especially the peasants?!"

"Oh, this is temporary! And today the masses are no longer with them."

The young people were approaching the train station. A long freight train had just stopped and Veretsky had to hurry up. Concordia stretched out her hand.

"Promise me that you'll do everything to save yourself for the future fight," asked Boris, clasping the girl's hand.

"I'll try..."

"No, don't 'try' but do everything for it!"

"All right, Boris Nikolayevich, but I hope we'll still see each other some day?"

"I think it's quite possible..."

They said goodbye and in several minutes Veretsky was sitting in an empty freight car waiting for the train's departure.

The arrival in his native place went by inconspicuously. At first he had to get used to the new conditions, completely unfamiliar for him, but little by little he got into the "soviet apparatus" and became an ordinary "soviet worker." Sometimes he received letters from Concordia, very unclear and anxious. At first they were beginning with the word "Respected," then with "Dear," and finally a love tone started to show in them. Now they started with "My dearest Boris" and finished with kisses. The last letter was burning with a complete declaration and demanded to break the Gordian knot in their relationship.

"Here's the Accord," thought Veretsky while he himself had complete discord after the front line life and his last meeting with another woman who left a deep mark in his heart for the rest of his life.

Veretsky had no time to answer to this letter because he urgently had to leave his

home of many years. CheKa was beginning to get close to him even here and the false documents could not help. Soon after finding out that they wanted to arrest him, he ran, never to return to his hometown.

Concordia's letters did not leave on him the deep impression she wanted. His thoughts remained under the domination of his feelings for another young woman he accidentally met and with whom he shared the hard times on the Sivashy coastline when encircled by the budyenovtsy.<sup>9</sup> After their escape from captivity, they parted forever, but the chance relationship continued to live in his thoughts and feelings, remaining as a symbol of the White fight. He could not forget this wonderful Russian woman.

During several years moving from place to place, Veretsky did not receive any information about Concordia. Later, sometime in the summer, he was traveling through the South of Russia in search of a job and passing through the town N. he remembered the old Rombysh and decided to visit him. With great difficulty he was able to find only Concordia, who was now married... to a communist.

Her husband was not home and she offered right away to be as frank as they were before.

"I'm a communist's wife because of your advice," she said to Boris with bitterness.

"Because of my advice?!" he asked, stricken by the reproach.

"Yes, Boris Nikolayevich, because of your advice!"

"Never could I give you such advice, Concordia Stepanovna!"

"You made me to promise you to fight for myself and for my father. It seemed that there wasn't another alternative when my father was arrested by GPU.<sup>10</sup> True, my husband saved him only temporarily, it seems, and only to justify himself in my eyes. Then he went to Moscow for a business trip and my father was arrested again. When my husband came back it was too late. My father was already shot..."

"And you got married not loving your husband?"

"I could never be able to love him..."

"You were led only by the desire to save your father?"

"What I could do, if in the critical minute my 'White dream' didn't even care to answer my letter!"

"So, it's me?" Veretsky remembered the last letter where she called him her 'White dream.'

"Yes, you, Boris Nikolayevich, you rejected me and maybe you ruined my father... not directly but indirectly... because life could have turned out differently... I thought ... and hoped..."

Veretsky was looking at her in surprise.

"Yes, yes, it's you, the one whom I love even now, despite all the offenses, all the harm and misfortune that you brought to me, you, you, you..."

Tears flowed from her eyes. She sat on a simple kitchen stool and leaning her elbows on the table covered her eyes with her hands.

This meeting discouraged Veretsky so much that he no longer knew what to do next. He did not feel himself guilty, there was no need to justify himself. He never gave any harsh advice and he could not be the reason for her father's death. He decided to wait for Concordia to calm down to clear up her delusion.

She sat there, her shoulders quivering, and waited for Boris to respond. Finally, she could not bear his silence any longer, and wiping her tear-stained face and dabbing the handkerchief to her eyes several times, she asked him, "Why did you come here? To save me? It's too late. Even if I decided to escape with you, my husband would find me anyway and I would find the same fate as my father. He knows that I'm 'White' and I'll die as 'White', but he puts up with me because of vanity... and career... A beautiful wife helps her husband-criminal to climb to the top of the communist career ladder. Only she's with a slight defect—of a noble origin, too proud and smarter than all of them, smarter than the district party secretary. But this could also be tolerated if a woman gives some hopes..."

"Concordia Stepanovna, your words scare me, you're telling a lie, you're slandering yourself with these terrible things, this couldn't be so!"

"I'm too famous in this district, Boris Nikolayevich. You can hear about me God knows what, but no one knows that I... sold myself to one man and, what to do now, I cannot belong to anyone else..."

When Veretsky was sure that Concordia had calmed down so that he could talk to her about the past, he told her about his life constantly on the run, he explained to her that this was the reason why he could not answer her on time. He told her that he could never give her advice to marry a communist and, in addition, without love, that her mistake was that she and her father stayed in the same place where everyone had known them for a long time and that was what killed her father and made her life so terrifying.

"Well, nothing can be corrected now," she answered sadly.

"Run and run all your soviet life – this is the only salvation."

"For me it's impossible, Boris Nikolayevich. I'm too well-known..."

"But our Russia is so huge..."

"Then, you don't know anything. If I escape today, tomorrow all the sleuths will be after me and sooner or later, infuriated, they'll catch me and tear me apart."

"But I, thank God, still save myself by escaping?"

"You, you're only a 'White'! You're a 'criminal', you need to be destroyed, but there are many of you. If you were able to slip away for a short time, they wouldn't be frustrated because they were able to get someone else instead of you but they're sure that they'll get you tomorrow. In other words, you're a part of a mass enemy and I'm a solitary one. I know it very well, therefore I see my end, a close one or a distant, I don't know, but – a terrifying one."

"Meaning?"

"Through humiliations, tortures, and then being shot..."

"It seems to me, Concordia Stepanovna, that you fell under the influence of red hypnosis. You need to wake up, shake off the influence of that environment in which you got trapped, and it wouldn't be that terrifying to run across Russia as it seems right now."

"Boris Nikolayevich, I'm under a watch all the time that has been set by my own husband. When he comes back, I'll have to give him an account about your visit and about our discussion. Tonight I'll have to come up with some kind of a 'truthful story' and conversation about 'this or that.'"

"But that's terrible!"



"Now, because you appeared in this apartment, yes, because my established life order was disturbed. In general, I already got used to this unnatural existence and only sometimes I bend my head to avoid or lighten a hit."

"Then, there's no remedy?"

"None..."

"Run away with me!"

"It's too late... This is impossible..."

"You're hypnotized, bewitched..."

"Leave your convictions... You don't know their life... I'm a personal enemy not only to the party but also to my husband. If I run away, then everybody will be on their feet, my picture will be probably multiplied in thousands of copies and distributed all over Russia. My every step, all my movements are controlled... I'm like in a harem, weak-willed with no rights and, most important, I'm always under a double suspicion as a criminal-wife and a criminal-citizen... But in a harem it still would be more joyous life because there are many women bonded together by the same misfortune and here I'm alone... and a eunuch..."

"A eunuch?" asked Veretsky shuddering from the horror that surrounded Concordia.

She looked at the clock, became pale and got up from the table. With harsh, dry voice she said, "It's time for you to go... it seems it would be too late... he is supposed to come..."

Veretsky stood up, not wanting Concordia to have troubles again, but he felt that someone had come into the room...

Yes, a person was standing by the door and silently listened and watched. For Boris it remained a puzzle when and how this person entered the house. He remembered well that Concordia locked the front door, leaving the key in the keyhole.

The stranger was horrifying and repulsive. His face that never knew shaving, had neither moustache nor beard. It looked at the same time like a gorilla's face and a physiognomy of an old drunk woman. The forehead was almost not there. A flat nose was so hitched up that the nostrils were displayed as two malignant abscesses. Abnormally protruding cheekbones were covered with yellow skin, speckled from smallpox. Small fish-like eyes were watering and motionless. The lower jaw protruded forward in such a way that the man could not tightly close his ugly mouth in which there could be seen a few half-rotten teeth. When the stranger put down his arm for a moment, Veretsky noticed that long and fleshy fingers reached below his knees. His body seemed unreasonably big and long and the legs, on the contrary, were too short. A nasty and suffocating smell of rot and alcohol was coming from him. An enormous strength of a beast could be felt.

"What about you, Concordia Stepanovna? Your husband drew away and you're having an affair right away, and probably with suspicious element? From your nobility?" finally he started talking with a hoarse astute voice. Only his thin lips stretched in a grin but in his watery unblinking eyes one couldn't read anything of his thoughts – neither obligingness of a dog nor stupidity of a chicken.

"Comrade Peters, ex-commander of the Latvian battalion during the civil war and now an investigator of the extraordinary counter-revolutionary matters, a friend and helper of my husband," said Concordia with simulated calmness.

"And this is my childhood friend, Boris Nikolayevich Veretsky, but he isn't of a noble parentage. His father was a coachman in our manor. As children we ran together barefoot on the dusty roads of the village or played in the dirt after the rain, making millponds, comrade Peters."

Concordia was lying and Veretsky was afraid that the investigator of the extraordinary counter-revolutionary matters would start questioning him. But Peters did not care about him now.

"Concordia Stepanovna, you know the order of your husband?"

"Yes, I know. But this is my childhood friend..."

"You know that the trial will be quick? You know that, except me, there shouldn't be anyone in this house, neither your friends nor relatives. What did you talk about with... this coachman?"

"I was remembering my childhood..." Her voice changed and she herself became small, grew quiet, suppressed as if someone unexpectedly had hit her on the head.

"That's why you cried?"

"Yes, comrade Peters..."

"You're lying, Concordia!"

"No, comrade Peters, you know that I can't lie to you..."

"What did you recall?"

"I know that I can't lie to you," she repeated muffled.

The investigator came up to Veretsky. "You... What's your name, Veretsky?"

"Yes, I'm Veretsky," Boris answered firmly."

"What... this woman... is impressionable?"

"Maybe for you," Veretsky decided to attack.

Peters did not expect this kind of answer. "Where do you work?"

"For Felix," Boris started lying bravely.

"For Dzerzhinsky? In Moscow?"

"Yes."

"You know Concordia?"

"Better than you and her husband!"

"She served with the Whites."

"I know."

"Her life is here," Peters showed a fist.

"In vain. Not everyone is clean even in the party..."

"I know. Mukhin bought her beauty. But he doesn't need her life..."

"Resell her to me."

"Mukhin will kill me. I can't. He's an animal."

"I'll get you a job with Felix."

Peters pondered. The fish-like eyes still did not express anything, but his thin lips were silently moving as if he reasoned with himself. "Could Mukhin reach me?" he asked after a long silence."

"To Felix's?"

"If I'll be with Dzerzhinsky<sup>11</sup>?"

"He's too small."

"He's there now..."

"Where?"

"With him, with Dzerzhinsky..."

"I don't think he'll see him. Your Mukhin here is like Dzerzhinsky, but in Moscow he's nobody!"

"Maybe... And how you will be getting to set me up?"

"That's my business. Let Concordia Stepanovna go with me now."

"No, first arrest Mukhin."

"Then you don't need Felix. We'll send someone else for his position."

"In this case... Take me with you right now."

"I can't, I'm going to Simferopol with a special mission."

"Write me a letter to Felix, then you can go with Concordia to Simferopol and I'll go to Moscow."

"Very well," said Veretsky rejoicing that he could easily pull the miserable woman out from the brutal hands."

"No, I won't go," completely unexpectedly said Concordia who was silently listening to the conversation.

"Why?" asked surprised Veretsky.

Peters turned to her.

"Concordia will go or..." he grabbed his throat with his fingers showing how he would choke her.

"I won't go. Choke me now, comrade Peters..."

"Now I can't. When Mukhin will order..."

"Concordia Stepanovna you have to come!"

"I can't"

"Why?"

Concordia was silent.

"You want to go to Moscow comrade Peters?" she asked with irony.

"Yes, I want to go to Moscow..."

"Mukhin will get you even there, don't you realize it?"

"No," interrupted Veretsky, "no one is going to get you over there."

"You don't know Mukhin," Concordia said in severe tone of voice.

"Yes, Veretsky, you don't know Mukhin," agreed Peters.

"Hypnosis," thought Boris, not knowing what to do next. He knew that iron has to be forged while it's still hot. He saw that it was very easy to fool this slow-witted Peters and to tempt with Moscow and Felix, but how to convince Concordia in the presence of this beast?

"Leave, Boris Nikolayevich, you don't know Mukhin," Concordia repeated.

"Yes, yes, Veretsky, it's better for you to leave..."

"Concordia Stepanovna, wake up," he cried trying to affect not only the brain but also the feelings, "the devil isn't as scary as they paint him. You gave too much way for Mukhin's influence. Regain consciousness, look at the reality not as Mukhin's wife but as Concordia that had the courage to exchange the tranquility, comfort, and peace of your home for the burdens and difficulties of the field life! Concordia Stepanovna! Wake up! It's not too late yet!"

"Then, it was a dream of my life, of my youth," she said with sunken voice.

Her eyes were almost covered with half-lowered eyelids. She was standing by the table holding onto the back of the chair. Her fingers shook.

"One more time I'm offering you freedom and a promotion to Peters, which he'll never be able to get in the future, to be Felix's right hand in Moscow."

These words had some effect on the monster standing next to him. The ugly Latvian turned to Concordia and took her by the hand. The woman startled in disgust but did not dare to take away her hand. He also started to convince her, "Concordia! There's nothing to think about. We can escape from Mukhin only now, otherwise death for you and then for me. You know it well yourself."

"Don't touch me," she said quietly to Peters, lifting up heavy eyelids. And—Oh, horror!—Veretsky saw glassy eyes, the eyes of a corpse... Only the lips were moving fast and the clear whisper was breaking all his hopes, "You're very naïve, courageous in your wish to help me but in vain... You came too late... I know that I'll be killed soon, but I chose this path voluntarily and I'll go till the end, comrade Veretsky! Mukhin is my lawful husband, our marriage was hallowed in church! No one has the right to dissolve it, goodbye..." she turned away and left without giving her hand.

"Did you hear it?" blew Peters, diverting Veretsky from his thoughts.

"What? That Mukhin got married in church?" he asked the Latvian.

"Did you hear?" Peters asked again.

"Answer the question!"

"I hear it first time... It's impossible... Mukhin is an old party member..."

"He probably got married secretly?"

"I don't know... Maybe... Then I'll kill him myself... First... I'll grab him by his throat with my hands... He wouldn't expect it... Suddenly... I'll smother him slowly... squeezing his throat... I'll take my revenge for everything..."

"And will you give Concordia to me?"

"Go away Veretsky, now I'm the master here... I don't need your Concordia... Don't hang out here... Go away... I'll destroy him with my own hands..."

"And Concordia?" Boris insisted.

"Don't bother her now... She won't go anyway..."

"And then?"

"I don't know... I don't know anything, Veretsky..."

"Why don't you know?"

"You, brother, don't know family dramas, you're still too young... I don't know myself how they'll die..."

"Who 'they'?"

"Mukhin's."

"But Concordia..."

"I know... Eve tempted Adam... In any case... If you're on time... then bargain with her yourself..."

"When?"

"I don't know... When there's a chance... then... Go away... Anyway, the answer has to be given soon... Mukhin will come... He'll find out everything... That you were here... Soon..."

"Why he'll find out? And what is it about?"

"You, comrade Veretsky, are from the center and don't know our life. And you don't know Mukhin and Concordia... If no one else will tell, Concordia will tell him everything herself... And I would have to answer."

"Why she cannot show herself to anybody?"

"Only with him. If without him – I'm watching her. If I don't keep an eye on her, he can shoot me. But this isn't your business..."

"What about Moscow, Peters?"

"It would be nice..." responded the Latvian."

"So, let's fix everything now... I'll write you a letter to Felix..."

"Concordia won't go with you... See, she's married in church... And with this nobility, you know how it works..."

"You convince her."

"It won't work. She won't go. She's firm."

"Let me go to her."

"No... When are you coming back?"

"Can't tell... Special mission... As soon as I catch them, then will be back..."

"A Sheatfish?"

"Worse," he lied and thought, "If you only knew who I am, you would probably smother me on the spot."

"Well, then pass by... Only don't come here... Call me on the phone... Tell that you're from Moscow... Maybe I'll take care of Mukhin by that time."

"Only save Concordia. Otherwise you won't see Moscow but your Mukhin, you understand?"

"I won't touch her, you can be at peace... Only Mukhin can pay her back. Well, leave because I don't have time to protect 'the lady'."

Peters was moving at Veretsky and Boris was not leaving but was retreating from this ugly figure. When they came to the door the Latvian stopped him, went outside and being sure that no one was there jumped to the corridor and almost pushed out Veretsky telling, "Quickly, quickly..."

While turning the corner, Veretsky began to think how to pull Concordia out. It was clear to him that she was under the strong influence of her husband; that her life was always in danger of a violent death. But he couldn't remain in this town. The train was leaving in the evening. Boris decided to try to speak to Concordia on the phone.

Not long before the arrival of the train he entered the telephone booth. There was no phone book. Veretsky asked to be connected to Mukhin's apartment, hoping the operator would know the numbers of famous people. His thinking was right. In a minute he heard Concordia's voice.

"Concordia Stepanovna," he addressed himself to her, "this is Veretsky, I want to see you one more time..."

Instead of the answer he heard a sizzle of a hang up of the telephone receiver. All that was left is to hope to meet with Peters on the way back.

But the circumstances turned out differently. From Crimea Veretsky had to go immediately to Caucasus, from Caucasus to Kiev, traveling secretly to confuse the trace, and finally from Kiev he went to Omsk.

In several years, tormented with hope for Concordia's rescue, he was able to come again to the N. town.

But all his searches were in vain. There were neither Concordia nor Mukhin. No one could tell anything about them. From all the available sources he could learn only that Mukhin had been working for some time as a chief of CheKa<sup>12</sup> and GPU and that he

was “a brutal man who shot his victims right in his office as they stood before him.”  
Was he married? No one knew it. About Peters or Concordia – no traces at all.

## Victor Pushkarev

It is a warm spring day. The fresh green leaves are barely moving in the trees and the fine fragrance of the early flowers is wafting gently in the crystal clear air. Only the birds are bustling, attentively searching for building materials for their nests. And a rare passerby, who lost his strength from hunger plods on with a lazy walk. There is no need to hurry. Yesterday it was hunger; he is still alive. And tomorrow?.. Only God knows the ways of human life...

Let us stop by this brick building for a minute. Here is a school. Slowly floating in the sunrays is dust stirred by numerous children's feet. The last break has just ended. When the teacher, Maria Ivanovna, came in the fourth grade class, she noticed that something was not right.

"Where's Pushkarev?" she asked the pupils.

"He isn't here..."

"He left..."

"He took his school backpack..." resounded the voices from the different parts of the classroom.

The teacher gave a deep sigh, sat at the table, and started the lesson.

The next day Pushkarev patiently sat through all classes. At the end of the last one, the teacher asked him to help her take the notebooks to the teacher's room. None of the children paid any attention to this because they always helped teachers carry maps, paintings, or notebooks.

Maria Ivanovna knew that there would not be anybody in the teacher's room at this time because everyone had already finished the classes and she was alone with her class. She also knew that no one was waiting for the student since he did not have friends at school.

When they came into the teacher's room, Maria Ivanovna closed the door.

"Victor, I want to talk to you," she said as he was putting the notebooks on the table and wanted to leave. Victor stopped.

"Well, tell me," he answered rudely.

Maria Ivanovna had gotten used to his rudeness and made believe that she did not notice his tone of voice. She knew all her students well and knew their parents and this often helped in her educational work.

---

Victor's father was a head accountant in one of the large factories of the city. He hurried to work early in the morning and came back home late in the evenings and sometimes, late at night. Numbers, reports, and balances appeared to him in his dreams mixing together with meetings, conferences, and production meetings while the family was left somewhere far, far aside. And that was completely natural.

At the neighbor's factory in one night disappeared, the director, head engineer, head accountant, not counting twenty technical specialists; in a mill an accountant was

convicted to be shot; in the executive committee another accountant was purged... Is it possible to count all the fears? Somehow the man is hanging on, thanks to God. Even though he has great prestige at the factory, but this is not stable now. The times are such now—today they almost put you on the pedestal and tomorrow you can get the highest degree of punishment. And it does not make any sense to change jobs because, from the Black Sea to the White Sea as from the East to the far West borders, it is all the same. And here he has gotten used to and adapted to the place. It a special purpose factory, pay is higher here, benefits are better and the family is better provided for.

The mother is a laboratory assistant in the same factory. She leaves for work together with the father. The whole day she works with current analysis but every day the routine is interrupted by the urgent or recurrent ones, and the job cannot be left uncompleted because they can accuse her of sabotage or wrecking, or they will simple humiliate her in all the meetings and in wall newspapers for not fulfilling the social emulation agreement. Every day after work she needs to sit in some kind of boring production meeting or professional union meeting. She can not return home earlier than eight or ten o'clock and it happens often that she stays there past midnight until one or two in the morning. She cannot stop working.

The family cannot be sustained with a half-starvation ration of one worker. And life is very uncertain now. Today the husband is working and tomorrow only God knows what can happen. That is why she has to be in a whirl the whole day in the factory, and at night at home to cook supper for two days; then when she finally gets to lie in bed—it is time to get up. Thanks to God the daughter Ludmila has gotten older and helps some around the house, but from Victor there is not much help—he is a boy.

The family gets together only on the days off. And even in that day they cannot rest completely. The father has his responsibilities and the mother has her own. Firewood has to be cut for the whole week, then the cooperative housing roof has to be fixed, then doors, then help his wife. The woman in the house had even more responsibilities—to do the wash, to mend the clothes, to cook for a week, to clean what is possible in the apartment—the day flies by and it seems that no one has any rest.

In reality Ludmila is a stay-at-home girl. She always seeks to help her mother, but one cannot keep Victor at home. And in general he was the complete opposite of his sister. He spent two years in each grade, and now Ludmila is catching up with him. If Victor has to remain the second year in the fourth grade, then he will have to graduate from school together with his sister.

That is how life turned out to be, the children lived by themselves and the parents saw them only once a week and briefly.

Victor gave often troubles to his parents but because of work and that enormous tiredness with which they came home from the factory, all these problems were taken superficially. The father and the mother thought, "Well, that's childish, it's common for this age. He'll grow up, straighten up, and will be same as everyone." Of course, it was unpleasant that the son did study poorly. They made a bit of noise and chided him but they accepted that it was impossible to fix anything anyway and they resigned themselves.

That is the way the children were growing up—Victor in the street and Ludmila in the house. Very often the parents did not see for several days the children or children the parents, because the father and mother returned from the factory late at night, when



a deep sleep had already closed the children's eyes.

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The elderly teacher knew how people lived now and she tried to instill into the children's souls what this harsh life had taken away from their fathers and mothers. She did not always succeed because children came to school only for four hours and the rest of their education took place with no supervision, often in the streets with their friends with bad morals, who lost their childhood a long time ago, and sometimes even their innocence. How many orphans and homeless, how many born of an accidental love and left to the mercy of the hungry country; how many of them witness brothels in their own homes, brothels badly disguised as homes with orgies revealed to the children. So many family dramas, tragedies, wild sprees, and wealthy power. Too many dirty images, which not only stain a child's soul but also disfigure it. And in addition, there is the Pioneer's education, this official public moral, which gives the most vicious crimes as examples of human life. It is not only impossible to fight against it but instead you need to hide the disgust and need to hold Pavlik Morozov's<sup>1</sup> ideals up as an example. It is not only hard but also scary to be a teacher now... But it is necessary to live...

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In the teacher's room the teacher offered Victor a seat. He leaned on the tip of the chair. On his face was written, "This old hag will be preaching to me again!" But Maria Ivanovna started talking to him about his progress and little by little proceeded with the problems.

"Victor, I don't want to hide anything from you. But you probably understand everything very well. Tell me what will you bring home to your father and mother when the school year ends?"

"So what?" he asked in same rude manner.

"You know, if you're going to continue studying like that, then you'll have to stay in the fourth grade for another year, and your sister will be able to surpass you!"

"So what, let her surpass!"

"Look, you're fourteen years old, you should be in the sixth grade by now and you still can't get out from the fourth!"

"So what!"

"What you mean, "so what" bread is not for free. Your father and mother are working from morning till night to provide you food and clothes and how can you thank them?"

"They don't have to work... I don't force them..."

"And how are you going to live? Who will provide you with food, where are you going to sleep? Who will provide clothes for you? Who will comfort and caress you? Who will be able to give you enjoyment?"

Victor pondered. But his eyes did not lowered even for a minute, they wandered around the walls of the teacher's room, avoiding eye contact with the teacher who was closely watching the expression on his face. Finally, he answered, "Others live completely without parents..."

"And is it better?"

"Of course," he answered after thinking a little.

"It means that you don't need your papa and mama?"

Victor was silent.

"Why then don't you leave the house?"

"Why should I leave? They feed me, well, let them feed me, I don't bother them..."

"But they may not feed such a son?"

"Let them only try! Soviet government will show them!"

"If you go to the cafeteria no one will feed you for free, you probably know it well?!"

"Yeah, I know, so what, do I have to pay them? Let them wait till I grow up... When I earn money then we'll see..."

"No, if you think that you're an honest person, you have to pay also now. Your papa and mama don't need your money, pay them by studying well, by obedience, by helping them; all of this is much more valuable for them than your money. And when you get older only then will you be able make good living; you'll become an engineer, a doctor, or an agronomist and for that you need to study well now."

"I'll be a stakhanovite<sup>2</sup> ...I'll join the party..."<sup>3</sup>

"Knowledge is needed there, too, then the work will be easier and you'll have more money..."

Victor started getting tired of this conversation. He started yawning, while sluggishly shifting his eyes from one object to another, and his careless sighs were saying: "Uh, how am I sick and tired of this waste of time!"

Maria Ivanovna understood very well that in front of her was sitting not just a child but a little monster, a product of the modern social conditions, whose soul was already distorted. She understood that to save this boy, who was at the verge of complete moral decomposition, was still possible but, for this, everything had to be changed drastically starting from the Kremlin down. She felt that she was powerless to do something. The most precious that she was trying to call upon, his parents, remained ineffective. To call upon the name of God she could only do in her thoughts because this little being could with the name of Almighty buy himself justification and fame at the dirtiest soviet organizations.

"I think I have annoyed you, Victor, but I want to warn you that it's not too late to correct the past. You're very clever. If you will work as a stakhanovite only this last month, you'll finish school well. I'll help you to become an honors pupil! Would you want that? Then it will be easier to be a stakhanovite and you will be accepted to the party sooner! You don't have to promise me anything right now, you may think it over for a couple of days... And you'll see how all the students and the principal will be surprised—Viktor Pushkarev is an honors pupil!"

Victor yawned loudly and got up from the chair.

"Forgive me, I held you over a little..."

The pupil was already walking towards the door.

"Well, goodbye, Victor... you'll let me know..."

Already behind the door Victor mumbled either "goodbye" or "I'll tell you" and running he dashed out from the school, which he hated with all the fibers of his child's soul. In a minute he had already forgotten his class and his teacher.

After Pushkarev left, Maria Ivanovna felt emptiness. All her experience and knowledge came to nothing. She saw and understood well that the conversation did not

have any effect on Victor. She knew that only a religious upbringing could have kept the child's soul innocent, pure, and clean; and she felt herself guilty towards this small animal to whom she was not able to instill a single drop of the Christian love even to those close to him. Frustrated, she came for several days to school and tried to run into Victor 'by chance,' even during the shortest breaks, to talk to him about something different, all the while hiding any anticipation of his response. Victor, not noticing her premeditated encounters, answered her with the same rudeness and obvious unwillingness.

Maria Ivanovna started to fictitiously raise his grades. Even in his written works she tried to invisibly correct his mistakes using the same ink just to give more points. She thought that it could raise in him a desire to take the books, to do more diligently his homework but it turned out to be just the opposite. Victor decided that "the old hag" got scared. Unfortunately, the teacher did not notice this.

Right before the final exams she had another talk with him. Just like the last time, Victor did not care at first and was impatient at the end. But Maria Ivanovna warned him, "Your fate, Victor, is in your hands. It's not too late. I promised you that with excellent grades on the exams you can improve the grades for the whole year."

Victor left the teacher's room yawning and not saying a single word. On her day off the teacher came to visit his parents for the last time and talk to them about their son. Luckily, he was not at home and Maria Ivanovna, who often visited the Pushkarevs, openly talked to the parents about all the scary things that she noticed with her experienced teacher's eyes.

Victor came back home only in the evening. His father and mother talked to him for a long time about the upcoming exams, until they finally heard a word from him that seemed as a promise to catch up.

But this word was insincere, it was just said in order "to be left alone!" and clearly the exams went by entirely different than the parents and the teacher were hoping.

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It is evening. It has already gotten dark. There is light in one of the classrooms that is facing the street. There, behind the thick brick walls the fate of the little people is decided. The fourth grade teacher is reading a report to the examination committee. It is the matter of the whole teachers' committee to draw a final decision on the pupils' future. But what could be said about Victor Pushkarev, who did not have satisfactory grades even in one of the trimesters and did not obtain them during the tests either?

In the shadow of an old chestnut tree on the opposite side of the street, pressing tightly against the trunk, stood one pupil whose name was familiar to all members of the committee. With tension he watches the shadows sometimes flashing on the wall that could be seen through the window and he rather guesses who sits where. He is holding a heavy rock in his hand. His whole body is like a taut string. His eyes are hurting from fixing on the window's light spot, the blood hammers in the temples, his mouth is dry, his ears are catching the silence, and it seems to him that someone is watching, looking, someone overhears his thoughts... Sometimes he throws away the rock and inconspicuously makes his way to the window, but it is too high and he is scared to climb—suddenly someone may see him...

With anguish, the time drags on slowly. In the child's head the red thoughts are

crowding and rises up an incredibly cruel plan of a punishment for his teacher, whom he hates with all his soul.

The light went off, the bright spot disappeared, and the school, the outline of which he detected in the dark, melted. And his eyes, that for a long time looked in the window, could not see at all, even the objects nearby were indistinguishable...

Suddenly he heard voices. His heart began to beat even harder, blood rushed to his head, legs that were shaking under his knees, could hardly hold his excited body... But the eyes began getting used to it. Unclear shadows were moving away from the school in different directions and familiar voices were saying the common words of goodbye.

Two women teachers parted from the darkness crossing a badly lit street. One of them was Maria Ivanovna. Yes, it was she. He knew her voice very well, her slightly round-shouldered figure he could recognize in a large crowd... Now she will say goodbye to her friend Claudia Sergeyevna and will turn to a side street... But where is the rock?.. Nothing can be seen in the darkness of the side street... Here she has already said goodbye and turned into the darkness... Ah, yes, here is a pocketknife!..

Several moments later a cry was heard... It rang out in the silence of the black night and reached Claudia Sergeyevna. She stopped for a moment and understanding that something had happened to her friend, rushed to her. Running into the side street, she noticed that someone small and brisk jumped out from it. Hearing a moan, she ran to Maria Ivanovna who was lying on the dusty road, and heard her weak and reproachful voice, "Victor, Victor!.."

Claudia Sergeyevna wanted to lift her friend but it was beyond her strength. She ran to the first house and started to knock asking for help.

In several minutes Maria Ivanovna was lying in bed waiting for an ambulance. Blood was running from a deep wound in the back, moistening the clothes and dripping on the bed. Her friend was fussing near her.

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The next day, the whole city knew about the incident. Petr Sergeyevich Pushkarev did not have a chance to sit down in his armchair in the office when the telephone rang. The police called him about his son's case. Worried, he reported to the director and went to the city. In the police station they told him that his son's case would be brought before the court and that the punishment for the crime would be the prison.

Pushkarev lost his self-control. When he arrived home, he saw his son, who was hiding in a dark corner of the room, silent, concealed, fearfully looking at the father. Petr Sergeyevich grabbed him by the collar, and shaking him shouted madly, "I'll choke you with my own hands... You're my shame... My misfortune... How could you raise your hand on a human life?.. How dare you raise a knife on someone to whom you are indebted?.. Do you understand that this knife struck my heart?.. Do you understand that you made me a killer?.. Do you know what is a human being?.. What is an honor?.. What is to love your neighbor?.. Uh!.. You're a fright, a little monster with no heart, no soul, no love... A bloodthirsty creature... No, I should not choke you... but to torture... just as they torture people until their deaths..."

He stopped for a moment because he got scared of his own words, he was afraid to say the truth, which was on the tip of his tongue, and throwing his pale from fear son

to the floor, shouted, "I'll abandon you... Let the proletarian court judge you... You won't come out from here even for a minute..." And with these words he shut the door and locked it with a key.

Ludmila was not home. She was standing in a line for bread. Vague words about her brother reached her there, but from them she only understood that something terrible had happened. She wanted to come home quicker to find out what happened. The line was moving slowly and a ten-year-old girl was moving impatiently forward.

After finally getting the bread, she ran home and saw her roused and upset father home at an unusual time. She understood that what happened was something very big and bad. The father strictly commanded, "Do not unlock the door from the kitchen to the room. I have the keys. Do not give this scoundrel anything to eat. When I come back from work I'll feed him myself..."

The little girl, alarmed by this kind of unusual episode, hid in a corner of the old sofa which stood near the kitchen stove and sat there silent and motionless till evening. At first, listening to the silence of the locked room, she imagined that maybe Victor was dying, or maybe, he was already dead and she was getting scared but after some time she began to distinguish vague sounds and paper rustle and she calmed down, thinking that father probably forced him to do his homework. From time to time she dozed but when she regained her senses, she quivered and again listened with tension to either silence or to remote noise until finally a deep sleep overtook her in the afternoon, replacing her nervousness.

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After the father left, Victor suffered the remains of first fear from his threats; forgetting about yesterday's attack on the teacher, he was trying to find a way to rid oneself from the parent's punishment. He did not know what happened after his escape from the dark side street and now for some reason he considered his father responsible for his confinement and the coming punishment. His mind was intensively working on how to evade from those threats, which father threw at him at the moment of a deep indignation. The more he thought about his father, the more grew his hatred toward him, and together with it grew the feeling of revenge. He thought that only by his revenge could he paralyze that strike of father's punishment, which will otherwise inevitably fall on his head.

In his small child's head flourished again various plans. Just as yesterday, he feverishly ran from place to place, going through preparation of a new crime.

His look fell on a big desk in which, it seemed to him, were kept important and mysterious papers. He came up with an idea to destroy everything that was dear to his father, and he, opening a drawer after drawer began to throw out from them the tied packs of letters, postcards, neatly folded papers, documents, and old music sheet.

Suddenly, from some kind of compact music sheets, stuck out a strange frayed piece of paper. Victor went for the music sheets. On the cover it was printed with big letters, "Sleep, the eagles of the struggle." Of course, he did not understand the meaning of what he read and pulled out the paper that caught his attention and threw the music sheet aside.

The old, hole-riddled with years piece of paper was lying on his knees. It was dated by year 1920. Victor read what was written on a typewriter and his distorted

child's mind traced a course of a devilish plan of revenge. He got out through a large hinged window-pane into the yard, and making his way like a thief, went out on a street. Here, he felt himself free and already boldly, without looking back, walked to the center of the city. As he came to the big building, which all the town knew as GPU,<sup>4</sup> Victor opened the door and disappeared behind it. No one saw him in the city again.

But his father, Petr Sergeyevich Pushkarev, also did not return from his work... In one hour and half he was already sitting in a dirty basement cell. In the damp and dark hole there appeared before his eyes the shabby old paper and he remembered the hard days of the year of 1920...

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It happened in Tavria. The battalion was standing near a small German colony. It was a quiet July morning. His older brother, Alexander, the artillery gun chief, was receiving orders from the superior officer and forwarding them to the artillery crew. Petr Sergeyevich remembers, as today, who he was sitting with, the volunteer, Strokov, behind the forth gun, fulfilling the responsibilities of the number two. He opened and closed the gun's lock, keeping all the time an eye on his brother. From the first moment of battery joining the battle, from the first shot, he felt somewhat ill at ease. Some kind of gloomy foreboding took over his soul and distracted his attention to such an extent that the bombardier-gun layer Strokov had to remind him, "Sir Lieutenant, the comrades are waiting for a present." The volunteer was telling it jokingly, when he, listening to the enemy shell whistling over head, forgot to close the gun lock.

Suddenly, after the command "Fire," when the recoiling gun body rolled to its place, he heard howling flight of the deadly metal. He looked back at his brother. The cooling metal was descending with an enormous speed.

"Sh-sh-sh-pack!" rang out the last sound of its flight, taking Alexander with it...

It was one moment. His brother fell without a sound. He was lying motionless on the green roadside grass. The top part of his skull was blown off. The gray cerebrum mixed with the bright blood splashed over the grass with horrible drops.

In the evening, the battalion's commander signed his warrant for travel, warmly and sympathetically said goodbye, sending him to his brother's funeral in Sevastopol, "Well, Petr Sergeyevich, that's our fate..."

The commander was also killed in a month...

He kept the traveling permission paper as a memory of his dead brother and his commander, and as a memory of hard struggle for Russia.

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And now, after fifteen years this dear paper was in the hands of the officials of GPU... It became his life sentence. Now he knew that he would soon reunite with his combat friends, but not as a soldier on the battlefield... He will be shot in this dirty hole by the mad enemies overtaken with anger and his dead body would be thrown into noisome pit together with the waste of the GPU's kitchen... He was not afraid of death. He was waiting for it every day for fifteen years but he shuddered from the thought that his son, to whom he gave life, turned out to be a vicious criminal and a traitor... Not without a reason the GPU chief called Victor to be an example of a soviet citizen...

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The senior accountant Gubarev, who was present during the Petr Sergeyevich arrest, was able only in the evening to fulfill his supervisor's request to inform his wife. He called the laboratory but Lydia Alexandrovna was not there.

Gubarev knew that Pushkarev will never return home and now walking to the apartment to see his wife, he thought of how to tell her about what happened.

The hungry and sleepy city was silent, the half-dark to dark streets and side-streets alternated from one to another. Somewhere the lights could be seen. In the center of the city a few couples were passing by the empty store windows dimly glimmering in the darkness. Only by the bright window of a "Gastronom," the passers-by slowed down looking over at the museum's rarities of socialism and getting their mouths wet.

Gubarev came to the Pushkarev's apartment with a solid decision to tell directly of everything about what happened.

"Lydia Alexandrovna, I forgot to call you on time, there was too much work today..."

"Something happened?" the tired woman asked, frightened.

"What, you don't know anything?"

"About Victor? I know... It's a terrible misfortune..."

"But also with Petr Sergeyevich..."

"He got arrested?..."

"Yes..."

This short word shocked her heart. She fell flat. Gubarev did not have a chance to help her. He ran up to her and wanted to help her get up but she remained motionless. He called her but she did not answer. With difficulty he carried her to the sofa trying to give her first aid but it was all in vain... He began to feel her hands as they were getting cold...

Gubarev got lost. He did not know what to do. Finally he decided to run to the nearest telephone. But how could he leave the crying girl? How could he leave the poor woman? There was no one nearby. He gave Ludmila a glass of water and told her from time to time to pour some water in the mother's half opened mouth, and he then ran to a nearby pharmacy.

A doctor from the emergency arrived in half an hour. He certified a heart failure as the cause of death.

Gubarev adopted Ludmila. Even though it was hard for him to sustain his numerous family, but he could not refuse the orphaned girl, the daughter of his former kind and sensitive supervisor, neither the father's tenderness nor a slice of bitter bread.

# The Humdrum Life In Socialist State

Snapshots of ordinary citizens' weekdays  
in the Socialist-Communist state  
and their struggle to survive  
under Soviet rule and Bolshevik dictatorship.



*So the World Would Not Forget  
Absurdities, Aberrations and Stupidities  
Of Soviet Proletarian System.*

## Prologue – A Socialist Settlement

“Equal lines of arrow-straight streets and lanes, asphalt, trees planted along the sidewalks, and built at the last word of socialist engineering beauty multi-story houses, near which there are flower beds and lawns—a wonder-town... And all this could spring up on the bare land thanks to the greatest care of the party and government! Only to think, that not so long ago there was only the boundless steppe here!” One can read frequently such laudatory articles in the Soviet newspapers or hear it on the radio, and those who neither know nor care about, that world-leading socialist construction engineering, may think, “It is indeed so, the Soviet government and communist party display a vigilant concern for their soviet people!”

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My friends! Dear readers! It may be the case that you have not had the honor of living in these socialist towns or settlements, about which our correspondents draw such a picture as on the cheap popular painting?

If you have never been to these places, then I can tell you about them without hiding anything. I lived in one of these settlements, which was considered to be the “model of socialist settlement.” But do not envy me. It’s not worth it. Do not consider me to be a lucky man, because for an entire two years I endured all the charms of this “model of socialist happy” life. And if you do not know all of these brilliant-in-form and deeply-socialist-in-composition charms, then I can—I even consider it my duty—to acquaint you with all of them.

“What for?” you would ask.

“In order to prevent... the catastrophe. That’s all. I warn you that you will not hear from me a single fictitious word or exaggeration.”

One October autumn day I entered a settlement endowed with the name of Kiselev,<sup>1</sup> where I was supposed to get the new employment. It was a gray day, gray people, gray houses, gray high up-to-the-ankles mud on the only paved street – macadam road. It was beginning at the gully by the side of the mine in the name of Kiselev, about one versta<sup>2</sup> away from the new settlement and ending in the town of Chistyakovo, near the railway station. This only road, like every macadam road, was paved with small, unpolished sharp stones, which quickly tore through your galoshes or shoes.

At the flanks of this macadam road full of thin mud stood the houses. On one side stood a three-story *zhilcoop*—cooperative dwellings—homes, and on the other, the two-story miners’ homes. The *zhilcoop* homes had the chimneys on the roofs, the miners’ homes had none. There was not even a hint of sidewalks, as well not a single tree, though every year they made *voskresniks*<sup>3</sup> or *subbotniks*<sup>4</sup> for the planting of the trees. During winter all trees were extricated to the roots, due to the lack of other kindling to start a fire.

The new place of living at first did not make any impression on me. Perhaps

because I was used already to everything being gray, and this “new” socialist style did not exert the proper influence on my psyche. I don’t know. But I took up residence on the third floor of one of the *zhilcoop* homes.

It was for the first time that I had received an apartment fully at my disposal. This was a pleasant surprise for me.

The apartment comprised two rooms, a hall and a kitchen. Yes, there was also some kind of store room, about which the older residents later told me that it was intended to be a lavatory! I took this in consideration, but I couldn’t use it—apart from the bare walls there was nothing there. And when (the nature was calling) it was necessary, please excuse me, I had to run down from the third floor...

Month of October in our region is cold and the residents already heated the apartments. Imagine my surprise when, on one of my days off, I saw on the miner’s homes an entire clouds of smoke billowing out of metal pipes sticking straight out of the windows! I asked my neighbors what was the meaning of such an uncultured treatment of socialist property by the apartment occupants, what was the meaning of this pipe decoration. And they told me that according to the project, the miners’ houses should have had a central heating system with a communal stoke-hole for all the houses, but there was not even visible promise of this stoke-hole and the workers and employees had to fetch the metal stoves, knock the glass from the window frames and extend the metal stove pipes outside.

How strange it was, but the exemplary socialist construction projects had not even made provisions for lavatories. It was true that a space for same existed in every apartment, but there were neither any sewerage nor any water pipes, or any other means of accommodating these aims.

Electricity was “provided” in limited quantities but using any kind of heating apparatus—even an iron—was prohibited.

So our “happy” life began. I had between twelve to fourteen lectures at the Rabfak,<sup>5</sup> after that—communal work or meetings. And the next day it was the same story. I immediately threw myself into the “pleasurable” work.

Life was colorful. As in all *zhilcoop* homes, in my apartment, it is true, there was a kitchen range; and in the larger room there was a tall, brick, free-standing stove covered on all sides with tiles, it kept the rooms warm, but we had to carry the coal from the basement to the third floor.

Yes—there was yet another “charm of the happy socialist” life that made “happy” the residents of the model settlement. The water in the houses was nowhere to be found (probably, they don’t have it yet), but in the rectangular courtyard of the *zhilcoop* homes there was one water pipe, to which the residents of the whole settlement would run. Out of the water pipe, for some reason, the water was always trickling in a thin stream, running out lazily, unhurriedly. And people would wait and stand in the rain and in heavy frost for hours...

And this was still tolerable. Well with the lavatories, gentlemen, it was.... And yet perhaps it was necessary according to the model of socialist rules? I don’t know, because I knew only superficially Marxism-Leninism, to the minimum extent that was necessary in order not to be thrown out of work and driven off to that place where a lot of people ended up for the practical training in this “science.”

Well, as for the lavatories...We all, the residents of the exemplary socialist

settlement, the engineers, technicians, teachers, employees of the mining offices, miners, students of the mining technical school, of the Rabfak and students of mining industry educational institutions, party members and non-party members, citizens, superiors and subordinates, Party committee secretaries and directors, men and women, old and young—all were going, as they say in Russia, “to the wind...”<sup>6</sup>

We got used to it. And everybody, to a certain extent, began to live cheerfully. Perhaps that’s why Comrade Stalin said that, “Life became better, life became more cheerful!” For whom? I now can say completely sincerely, “For us.” Because we got used to everything. And we forgot all life’s discomforts. Because, we have learned to cope with all socialist “comforts” with Stakhanovite<sup>7</sup> speed. At first—it’s true—it was somewhat difficult. It was uncomfortable. But then everything became normal. Well, you’d meet a familiar or unfamiliar fascinating person somewhere near the outside wall of the building and would not even turn your faces away from each other, and sometimes even exchange a word or two. We laughed. At what? That is well known...

It is true that in the center of the courtyard, which was surrounded by the *zhilcoop* homes, next to an enormous open garbage pit, there was erected on a similarly deep pit a long wooden lavatory with numerous circular holes for communal usage, and it was separated by a thin wall into two sections—for men and women. The residents told me that nobody had ever cleaned it but just disinfected it in the summer by splashing the inside with lime. But shortly after its opening ceremony it was befouled to such an extent that it was impossible to enter there. Only in the warm season would someone have the courage of flinging out of a pail, straight onto the floor, all that had been collected that night by the entire family in the chamber pots.

In a word, it was fun. You might meet, let’s say, with colleagues in the teachers room during break time and talk about the “socialist happiness.” You hear tales about the past period of time. A historical period, of course. And you could not figure out whether our life was an anecdote or reality. Where is the truth, where is the lie?.. Although, everything was plausible. Because you remembered yourself in the same kind of situation. All the stories were from real life. Socialist stories.

What a person can get used to! We all got used to the “socialist lavatories—the call of nature!”

A Social Science teacher, Comrade Shishkov, recounted to me once how Van Vanych, the Mathematics teacher, met with Mary Vannoy, the Physics teacher, at the blind walls of the *zhilcoop* home and how they carried on a pleasant conversation during their meeting. Van Vanych approached, grinned, but he did not even consider any need to deny anything. But on the other hand he recounted how Vas Vasych, the Language teacher, one morning popped like a cork out of his apartment on the third floor and began tearing downstairs like the express train, leaving behind him on his entire route the trail of a brave journey! It turns out that he decided the day before to have a supper at the student cafeteria! And here Vas Vasych was on hand to confirm the events in full. I thought to myself, “No, all of this is true, because meetings between myself and Mary Vanna also took place and I, too, burst out of my apartment like a cork.”

Well tell me, dear readers, wasn’t this a cheerful way to live? Wasn’t the “dear” leader of the proletariat right that life had become cheerful and happy? Well?..

While it was winter, all of this was nothing but cheerful little chats, in which

participated all the residents of the entire settlement in every place of our socialist settlement. Everyone was cheerful. Everyone laughed. But the winter passed. The snow began to thaw. Along with the warmth, the winter flowers began to bloom in the model-settlement of ours, named after Comrade Kiselev... "Lawns and flower-beds" were revealed.... The settlement was shrouded in a suffocating stench...

Thankfully, I left for Moscow for two months of the summer session at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute... Only after my return I smelled that scent of the "flowers", but my colleagues and neighbors had got so used to it that they would not notice it any more.

Compared to many others, I was, nevertheless, in a more advantageous situation—I lived on the third floor, the window of my apartment overlooked the steppe. The heavy stench didn't rise very high, and this was saving me.

And you say, "Ah, the soviet government and communist party really display unremitting care for its people!"

Yes, it was a cheerful way to live... We laughed through our tears...

## Smoked Rib

Lived comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin,<sup>1</sup> frankly speaking, not entirely peacefully and not entirely calmly but he became so accustomed to this not entirely peaceful and not entirely calm life that it seemed to him that he truly lives calmly and peacefully. He no longer noticed, saw, heard, and felt many things, and, perhaps, he would have continued to perceive the socialist paradise further if he did not decide to see his relatives.

The vacation time was coming and impudent thoughts emerged in Ptichkin-Pevichkin's mind. He wanted to have a rest somewhere on the far sunny South. But how any citizen, who according to the most democratic constitution has the right to rest in a special resort, can have a rest there if all passes of admission to these resorts are given by the trade union at its discretion. And this discretion is well known – in the first place, in the second, in the third and somewhere at the end where no passes of admission are left there Ptichkin-Pevichkin's name could be mentioned.

It is clear that under these circumstances one would recall all relatives! But Ptichkin-Pevichkin limited himself to cousin-sister and native brother for now. And the brother was just in case if cousin-sister denies giving some place to stay on his lack of it.

With most cheerful hopes he arrives early in the morning to his cousin-sister, that lives in town of Evpatoria. That's in the Crimea. On the Black sea... He appears at the right address. Knocks on the closed shutters. A woman-citizen of unknown appearance comes out on the porch.

"What," she says, "you, loafer, are causing trouble to people in such early morning?"

"My sister lives in the present house," says comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin. "It is desirable to visit... I arrived specially from the capital..."

"Are you drunk, citizen, or out of your mind? I never saw any brothers in my entire life!"

"The question is not about you, esteemed woman, but about one who lived in this house for ten years, about Glafira Evgrafovna Vorobyshkina..."<sup>2</sup>

"You, citizen, bought a ticket to the wrong place. Your sister resided here but she deigned to depart to the far North—with blessings of KGB—with her legal husband."

"How it can be? I have a letter from them with me! It was written a month ago!..."

"But your sister left three weeks ago! You, citizen, troubled yourself in vain and there was no need to disturb me in vain!"

Unknown woman citizen slammed the door in front of his nose, recalled behind the door some kind of counterrevolution, and faded away. Ptichkin-Pevichkin stayed for a while, turned and, now without any cheerful thoughts, went away.

He walks and sees – the sea spreads in front of him far wide. The beach is the most wonderful. The water is emerald. The sun reflects in it. The sky is azure. God's Paradise! Live and enjoy your life, but no, there is the far North for you. In spite of not pleasant thoughts that poisoned his mood, Ptichkin-Pevichkin could not resist the

beauty of the sea and plunged, to tell you the truth, not in the watery depths but nevertheless splashed the water three steps from the seashore with the jellyfish. He was afraid to go far because of the inability to float on such large quantity of water.

"This is not a bathtub, comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin, here, perhaps, one cannot reach the bottom with the hands!" he thought, sitting on the sand and dousing bony back with the salt seawater.

He took a bath, became hungry and wandered to the city. He walks and thinks where it would be possible to have some nourishment. He reads signboards, attentively studying them: Evrabkop,<sup>3</sup> Evgorispolkom,<sup>4</sup> Evkomunkhoz,<sup>5</sup> Evryba,<sup>6</sup> Evnarpit.<sup>7</sup> All the names are so strange. Not exactly Jewish, and not European, but probably they could originally come from our respected first mother Eva? But she never learned "the alphabet of communism" and did not observe socialism in practice.

Anyway, Ptichkin-Pevichkin entered Evnarpit because this word has something about nutrition. One can see the tables behind the window. He was not mistaken. He sat at the table. A "woman-server" came hurriedly. That is, the waitress.

"What do you want, citizen?"

"Something solid to eat..."

"Tea, coffee, cocoa?"

"I want to appease hunger, need some hearty meal..."

"Hearty meal, citizen, usually people order at dinner time..."

Ptichkin-Pevichkin ordered tea, rinsed his intestine with unknown liquid and went to stroll around the town because he still did not know exactly what to do—to return home or to make a trip to a dear brother.

He strolls on the empty streets and every half hour tightens up his belt so the stomach does not seem empty. It seems to him that everything is cheerless and unfriendly in this town. Maybe, from hunger. Or maybe from misfortune of not finding cousin-sister at home, or because he looked at the watch too often.

Sharp at noon Ptichkin-Pevichkin was already sitting in Evnarpit. He sits and examines the menu. "Chops" is written in large letters.

"Down," he thinks "with borshches and soups—half-liquid dishes. I will better take two portions of chops! This is exactly hearty meal!"

As soon as he thought about a hearty meal the waitress came.

"What are you going to order for dinner?"

"Two portions of chops!" solemnly exclaimed Ptichkin-Pevichkin.

"Only one portion is allowed, citizen."

Starving Ptichkin-Pevichkin shriveled.

When the chops were brought, he began to eat. Hardly had he turned his fork, he stopped wonder-struck and started to examine a mass of undefined form, color, smell and taste distinguishing some grains. He took unceremoniously some amount of it in his hand in order to satisfy himself for sure that it was eatable and determined that chops are not chops but some kind of a cake formed from buckwheat. He called the waitress.

"I asked for chops, woman-citizen..."

"What do you think it is? A fried boot?"

"But it is..."

"Better read the menu, citizen, and do not distract workers from their work

because we have a standard norm to fulfill,” not very politely answered waitress and went to serve other customers of Evnarpit.

Ptichkin-Pevichkin took out his glasses, cleaned the lenses in order to read without mistakes.

“Chops,” and in the brackets there is an explanation written in small letters, “from buckwheat.” Below – “Cutlets” and in the bracket again an explanation, “from carrots,” then “Roast beef” and an explanation to it – “from potatoes.”

“What a joke,” he thinks, “It seems the eatery is vegetarian!” He put on a bold face and asked another waitress.

“I would like something from meat to strengthen my organism...”

“Did you, citizen, appeared here from Mars? The country maybe is having meat crisis because of extermination of total herds by kulaks<sup>8</sup> and you are demanding meat!”

In one word, Ptichkin-Pevichkin entered Evnarpit being hungry and left it being hungry, too, and he went now to the port with firm intention to sail to his native brother. He bought a ticket to Novorossiysk on motor vessel “Georgia,” sat in it and unmoored from the happy coast of Evpatoria...

The next day he happily arrived to his brother’s. Brother remained as a bored bachelor and was in clover of Novnarpit.<sup>9</sup> So Ptichkin-Pevichkin had to try his luck of new community feeding also here but this time he alertly looked what was in the brackets.

During his first visit to Novnarpit he studied menu as an algebraic equation opening brackets and came to a conclusion that buckwheat grain, millet, potatoes, carrots and other “plants meats” with doubtful fats make up the foundation of the new socialist people’s nutrition, therefore he categorically gave up hot dishes. But waitress in Novnarpit turned out more polite and offered “something from meat.”

Ptichkin-Pevichkin looked at the card of cold snacks and was delighted, “Smoked ribs! Smoked sausages!”

“And what is written in the brackets?” asked his brother with a bitter ironical smile.

“From dolphin...” sadly pronounced Ptichkin-Pevichkin. “Does it mean that soon they will serve four legged dogs without any brackets?”

Pretty waitress bended over Ptichkin-Pevichkin’s ear and whispered, “The starving mothers are eating their own children, because all dogs have been already eaten long ago, and it also means that you are not hungry!”

Ptichkin-Pevichkin took sudden leave from his dear brother and went home where his wife, a hero of starving time, was inventing both, the smoked rib and the real chops... They were real. Weren’t they?



## Dung-seasons Coat

Some citizen dreams of daylight, as if it is celestial manna because the proletarian hand of justice hangs above him as the sword of Damocles and does not allow his eyes to close at night. Another cannot wait for the night because it is easier to take cover from a “vigilant eye”<sup>1</sup> in darkness. And another draws in his imagination a thin slice of an ordinary daily bread, because damn worm has sucked in the stomach from some years of happy and prosperous socialist life. But there are also others who, choking on feigned enthusiasm, turn their sight to the time, begging for themselves only one minute of quietness per day in order to forget all, the proletarian hand of justice, “the vigilant eye,” and a thin slice of an ordinary daily bread, and many other things which, let’s say, a person from the “rotten capitalism” cannot even imagine.

And here is comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin, as a person... H’m! Really! The person! Some kind of an unfortunate rotten intelligentsia, not a person! Just common technical specialist who is tolerated by some miracle! Listen attentively when the responsible member of party CPSU(B)<sup>2</sup> calls him “Comrade!” Oh, how much indulgence and irony, arrogance and contempt when he addresses him!

So, this comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin has dreamed! What about? About a coat! About ordinary all-seasons coat!

Certainly, there is such a reader that will think, “What a poetic surname and what strange prosaic dreams!” But to the historian it is forbidden to recede from the truth. And our century is oak-hard-materialistic now.

This dream truly had the reason. The first all-seasons coat has been bought on the first earned money early in 1912. It was made from the fine English black broadcloth with a velvet collar. In 1927, after long family discussions, it was decided to have the coat turned. By 1933 it has been in such terrible condition that its owner was afraid that it would fall apart somewhere during the obligatory demonstration or while standing in line for bread.

Yes, it was understandable. Even comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin himself was worn out! You know the times, ladies and gentlemen! It is necessary to build socialism in any weather, under any circumstances. Not once our hero thought that it would be nice if this “esesera”<sup>3</sup> would be somewhere in Sahara. There the proletarian government would not need much to take care of the people (workers could walk naked) but here on the Russian soil, only the climate costs a lot!

To put it briefly, comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin has started to glance at show windows of state shops<sup>4</sup> but could understand nothing. The signboards says, “State shop №36” but shop windows are empty and it is difficult to understand what is sold there. May be rubbers or may be hops. More likely hops because there would be a long line for rubbers.

And when three business trips were coming, his dreams led him almost to insanity, he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep or do anything successfully. Even his wife was frightened, “My darling Cockatoo,<sup>5</sup> you will become thin from your dreams and

will buy the wrong size of coat for your normal build!..”

However, it was already impossible to get rid of this condition.

Before the first business trip Ptichkin-Pevichkin had run around all numbers of state shops in his city but he found nothing besides boring shop assistants and shop managers. He even became bored himself as these attendants were so contagiously yawning when he asked them about when the coats would be in the shop.

“Not exp-e-c-ting... e-e-eh!..” everyone answered in the same manner yawning in the middle of a word.

At last our hero is going to the city of Rostov-on-Don. The time on business trip is not taken into consideration.<sup>6</sup> So, he is running along the Grand Street and Garden Street scouring the state shops and asking citizens, but the answers of salesmen were lazily indifferent. And those of townspeople – fearfully-embittered while thinking, “Wood-goblin only knows, what kind of a specimen is this man! Maybe he wants to extort what a petty person dreams about the Soviet authority, or it can be that he is some kind of “the enemy of the people”<sup>7</sup> trying to confuse a decent citizen?”

And another passer-by will snap, “I am not a shop manager, walk to the right address...” and would jump aside with a three-tier remark.

Comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin has not grieved about empty shops in Rostov-on-Don – he has two more business trips ahead.

Next, he goes to the city of Kharkov. Bright and cheerful from hopes, during the free hours he makes a tour of the city intended for places to sell desirable type of clothing. In this manner he has made the round of streets and side streets and finally, quite by chance, got into a pleasant enough shop in which the attending staff had not just business-like appearance but they were rather busy.

“It’s desirable a coat for me...” for some reason he has timidly addressed to the salesman.

“Size?”

“I wear forty eight...”

“We have only forty four and fifty four!”

“It is a pity...”

“But you, citizen, try it on. Our buyers always buy bigger sizes because others do not exist.”

He put on size fifty-four (Ptichkin-Pevichkin even got scared). He became ugly as Mister Plushkin<sup>8</sup> in a dressing gown. And what a material! My God! Even peasant coats in olden times were nicer and had an excellent material! Horse blankets are softer than this!

“A little bit too big...” he said timidly keeping silent about the quality of the material.

“It is up to you, citizen,” answered one of the salesmen, unceremoniously shaking out the prospective buyer from an overall loose frock that was named all-season coat.

“Well, nothing to do. Moscow is still ahead! The Capital! So there, could be no doubts, surely one can buy a coat there!”

It started. Narcomats<sup>9</sup> and trusts alternated with state shops. Ptichkin-Pevichkin did not feel his legs anymore. He uses one hundred twenty percent of his time as Stakhanov.<sup>10</sup> He stayed being in such condition for a couple of weeks, has got exhausted, grows hungry but anyway has not seen a coat!

He sat on the train and was traveling home. Anyway, it's impossible to wear the old coat now – after this business trip it is falling apart right on the street. And new one?

He stopped again in Kharkov. Ran to the shop where he tried size fifty-four and thought, "I will have it done over by the tailor!"

"Goods do not wait for a buyer!" angrily replied the salesman who fitted him some days before. The shop indeed was empty. He left slowly and made his way... to the flea market.

He bought! He bought very same coat he tried on before at the shop by paying four-hundred rubles instead of two hundred. He bought it without trying not only because he has already tried it, but because ten hands were already holding it. He came home. Not really happy, although with a new thing. Anyway he could not wear it. And wife here, "Dung!"

Brought to the tailor, "Dung!" But anyway he altered the coat and Ptichkin-Pevichkin had to pay another one-hundred-and-fifty rubles for the work.

His colleagues, "Dung!"

What? Dung? The coat?

You are mistaken. According to special father Stalin's order for socialist citizens, "They eat food that is worse than this, let them wear also such clothes!"

Comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin got furious. And it is unknown what would have happened to him further, if not for his daughter, seventeen-year-old Katyusha.

"Dearest Father, is this your dung-seasons coat?" she asked it with such a pretty smile that Ptichkin-Pevichkin couldn't resist to refrain from laughing... What was he laughing at?

## The Unexpected Gift

Katyusha is finishing the ninth grade. The gift is necessary. After all she is almost the honors pupil. If there would not be those social science teachers, she would be now the honors pupil. But there is a fashion among these Party members dogmatists to put the students' marks according to the parents' past life! Well, let's say who is Ptichkin-Pevichkin? Sure, he is a technical specialist, the chief of the chemical laboratory but it is also true that his parent had some connection to the church—he was a regent of the church choir. So, it turns out he is among the decayed intelligentsia.

The enemy? No one will describe him as a friend of the Soviet authority, so any party comrade by all means thinks, "He can be the enemy!" They keep him not because of favor but of necessity.

Ptichkin-Pevichkin perfectly knows his position and considers all circumstances of the time, place, the reasons, and manner of surrounding influence on the happy citizens. Certainly he went through the time when technical specialists were imprisoned in packs. It used to be that about thirty or forty people would disappear in one night. It is clear that he also shivered and did not sleep, although on the job he tried to hold himself with dignity, but he checked all the analyses of his subordinates, so even one one-hundredth share of a percent could not be counted as a deliberate wrecking.

There were no thoughts about the gifts then. The head was splitting from the strained thoughts about the destiny of "decayed intelligentsia." And what you think, that in such institution like Esesera<sup>1</sup> the person would not become rotten?

It has become somewhat easier now. Undoubtedly, they still imprison technical specialists, but today they take them individually—one hears that at night had disappeared one or in extreme cases two people, but sometimes the night will pass quietly. It seems that it became so-so acceptable. Once in a while Ptichkin-Pevichkin would shiver and then it would pass; everyday business does distract.

So, in the time of such quiet circumstances an idea engendered in his head to make a present for his only daughter, Katyusha. This idea appeared suddenly, but it was preceded with one circumstance.

They brought a supply of manufactured fabrics into the town, and in a flash all the population was electrified by a short but rather significant phrase, "They give out." This phrase had no effect on Ptichkin-Pevichkin himself because he knew his strengths and possibilities and would never make up his mind to subject himself to heavy standing in line suffering. How could he, a small, puny and weak person! While standing in line they could not only smother you, but in general, they would turn you into ashes! And he does not have enough time for it. Unless perhaps it would be possible to devote a vacation to such pleasure.

Once in the evening, his daughter after a quick supper was going to leave. Mother was packing a piece of bread for the road. Ptichkin-Pevichkin looked puzzled at what was happening and asked the daughter. "What is going on? Do you have *subbotnik*?<sup>2</sup> Are you going to help with harvest at a farm?"

"Going to stay in line, daddy, they brought a manufacture!"

"Staying in line? But it is ten o'clock in the evening now. And the shops will not open until tomorrow morning!"

"Yes, daddy, but the line is already started to form now. Don't think that I shall be the first one..."

The daughter left and the kind daddy, worrying about one more charming side of a "happy life," asked his better half with indignation, "What is it, does our daughter have nothing to wear? Is it really necessary to stand in line the whole night? Can it be really true that the person must be doomed to such 'happiness?'"

"Dear Cockatoo, she is not the only one. Almost all her school class is queuing. Young! They want nice clothes; our girls are becoming maidens and their dreams are maidenly. What one can do? Let her try, maybe happiness will smile to her."

Ptichkin-Pevichkin didn't even know whether he slept this night or not. He had all kinds of nightmares—now Katyusha was strangled in the line; then they pulled her to militia quarters and were drafting a report; then the ambulance behind an old nag drew her... What the parental heart could not think up and would not imagine!

He spent his melancholy day in working on analyses while having only one thought, "Did 'they give it' to her or not?" And in the evening, tired and hungry, he heard the usual.

Katyusha was thirty-fourth in the queue. If everything was as it should be, she would have been in the shop on the fourth call. But the line was made up normally until six o'clock in the morning. By that time militiamen came and dispersed everyone. People certainly did not go home. They hid in gateways, in other courtyards, in the cooperative housing corridors and looked out to see when guards of the law would leave. But militiamen strolled near the shop, which attracted everyone's attention, and only by the time of its opening did they allow a line to form. This happened so unexpectedly. The new people came, and as it was found out later, they were relatives, friends, and acquaintances of those same militiamen and they started to stand by the door of shop.

When the hidden people saw that limbs of the law did not object, they started to run to the shop with wild shouts and whooping and, certainly, all the previous order of line was broken. Those who were closer, who could run faster, and finally those who were not especially afraid of Cerberuses in the militia uniform, those managed to be closer to the door. Clearly, under such circumstances the naive girls lost their advantage to be lucky. And now they were at the end of the tail. But youth is obstinate. They stood right up to the closing of the shop, hardly having reached half of the way.

With tears in her eyes Katyusha returned home. The happiness that seemed to be so close was destroyed by the harsh life about which high and low chatter pretended as if it were the most beautiful life, for which everyone thanks the great and wise leader. Perhaps, it was the first encounter of the girl with the real life.

Ptichkin-Pevichkin felt as if he was killed. He was sorry for his little girl up to tears. He wanted to make for her something extremely nice, he did not want to admit her to this ugly reality, but he was powerless...

After supper Katyusha began to get ready to go for the queue again.

"Again?" the father asked.

"Daddy, perhaps all the militiamen's relatives have passed already; maybe this

time I will manage to reach the counter,” Katyusha replied and kissing her parents for parting, she left with a slice of bread.

Again for the father was a night of tortures, dreadful visions, and heavy thoughts.

On the next day, pale, grown thin, and exhausted from the sleepless nights, Ptichkin-Pevichkin sat in his office. His thoughts were far away from factory and from laboratory. He was immersed in thoughts about his daughter. Suddenly came in a worker recently appointed to work at the laboratory, comrade Akimov.

“What is it, comrade chief, that you are so gloomy?”

Ptichkin-Pevichkin told his sad story about his daughter’s night standing in the line to buy the fabric.

Akimov smiled. “E-e-e! Comrade chief, queues are not only for children but also for all adults! There is only one way to get something—a PZ<sup>3</sup> card.”

What you mean PZ card? And there are no cards anymore now,” replied the surprised chemical laboratory chief.

“There is such a card and it is called ‘*Po Znakomstvu* – By Acquaintance.’ But you, certainly, do not have such card but I can help you. I have a dress length piece. It will suit a girl. It is export manufacture! I can offer you to buy it because I need the money now.”

“My dear fellow, comrade Akimov, I shall thank you all of my life!”

“Not at all! If you want I can bring it right now... I am living, close... And your daughter will be happy...”

In half an hour the dress length cut of fabric was lying on a table. Ptichkin-Pevichkin looked and almost fainted. The thinnest wool of Bordeaux color, light as down, caressed his eyes.

“Comrade Akimov! It is possibly from olden time?”

“Well, come on, it is soviet export material. You will not find it at shops. It is only in the tridzatka<sup>4</sup> for responsible party members!”

“How could you...?”

“How? They offended me. All my life I worked in commerce line. So then someone started to be envious. They called me to the town Party committee and said, ‘You, comrade Akimov, possibly have nourished yourself well, now you have to give your place to another comrade and you go and have a rest at the factory otherwise you will grow too fat.’ Well, certainly, it is impossible to object. They sent me here to the factory. It is clear they will not treat me badly. I still have acquaintances left in there. I will get all I want. And that the salary here is small, it is also not so terrible because one always can sell something that one has as a spare. People are hungry for everything!”

“How much you want for the dress length?”

“Three hundred rubles, comrade chief.”

Comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin almost fell down from fright but love for his daughter was more dear than any money, and without bargaining he counted out the money and hid the dress length in a drawer of his desk.

“Well, thanks, comrade Akimov, you helped me out...”

“And you, comrade chief, if something else is necessary, I will do it right away for you... As long there are the money—whatever goods you want...”

The worker left. Ptichkin-Pevichkin wanted to stop working and run, find his daughter standing in line, take her away from there and make her happy with this

supernatural gift! The Wool! And what kind! My God! He wished his working day would end!..

Well, the luck had deceived Katyusha this time, too. The same history repeated. The same militiamen dispersed the order of the queue. The same people came and took the first places at head of the queue. After those stood the strong people, then the losers followed...

But what happiness awaited her at home! Barely she stepped into the threshold, sad, with large tears in her eyes, the father solemnly opened his old briefcase and even more solemnly presented her a package. "It is, Katyusha, for all your labors!"

Katyusha, eagerly anticipating what was inside of the package, started impatiently to untie the twine that it was tied with. With the same impatience, the mother looked after her every movement. At last, the package was opened!

"Wool! Bordeaux! Mama, look, how thin it is! Daddy! Daddy!.." and the girl broke into tears of happiness.

But she was not the only one who burst into tears. Wiping tears also was her mother and Ptichkin-Pevichkin frequently blew his nose while imperceptibly putting the handkerchief to his eyes.

## The Glove Affair

Comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin needed gloves. The things that seem not to be scarce on the market. In fact, not everyone needs these small things. The majority do not need them, whether on stinginess or because they consider that gloves are bourgeois prejudice.

Nevertheless, Ptichkin-Pevichkin, who did always wear them since childhood, could not imagine himself without them, especially now in his venerable years. In addition, he was not just a common worker but also a technical specialist, moreover, the chief of a chemical laboratory.

For a long time he glanced at his old friends who were shabby and full of holes, with splitting at the seams, but was afraid to think especially much about the new gloves, because he was thinking with fear about the words “they give,” which means that the merchandise suddenly appears in the usually empty store.

As he was all in the past, he carried out his life only in the present. Therefore, it was natural that all of his thoughts were coming down to not yet gray-haired past, which seemed to him irreparably gone, those days when it was possible to just simply buy everything.

However, they say that socialism has made humankind happy. Thus such element of happiness turned out to be this “they give.”

But they do not give it for free. The buyer pays with many hours of standing in line during frost or in heat, under rain or hailstones, knee-deep in dirt or in snow, in storms and during bad weather, under the bright sun or dim radiance of the moon. He pays with his legs, hips and head; when he squeezes himself into the cherished *gostorg*—the state shop—he pays with the buttons and hooks that fly away from his clothes that often require thorough repairs. At last, hardly alive, he gets into the *gostorg*, but they do not show him goods, do not ask him what he wants, but laconically announce, “Size forty-six” for ready-made goods or, “Five meters per person, pay thirty-seven fifty!”

But it is not all. Still it is necessary to pop out as a cork from the shop. In the doorway people collide between those squeezing in and those squeezing out—doors are narrow. After some silent collision of two opposite forces, at last, it happens, squeezing in with the help of one or two militiamen, depending on the length of the line, and then happens the squeezing out of the overcrowded shop. As a result, the hungry buyer most of the time is not satisfied with the purchase and especially with his own miserable look.

Ptichkin-Pevichkin started to remember what it was that lately “they gave.” He thought of many items but could not remember that they were “giving” gloves. This fact encouraged him because he terribly did not like that “they give,” maybe because he did not want to pay for the goods with his hips and threadbare suit, the only one he had; but maybe for a principle. But to be convinced about the truth he addressed his companion, his darling wife, “So, my dear Partridge, are ‘they giving’ gloves or one can just buy them?”



"I did not hear that they were 'giving' gloves and I do not know whether they have them at the *gostorg*, she answered and promised to find out from comrade Zhulikova, wife of one shop manager that lived in the neighborhood.

In the evening Partridge informed him that gloves are still sold and Ptichkin-Pevichkin, with his companion, decided to hurry to make a solemn going out to the city with the purpose to buy gloves.

The evening's rare street lamps hardly lighted up wide streets and, if there was not for snow, it would have been difficult to distinguish beaten paths, and in general, one could have been lost in his native town.

So, here are the cherished "gostorgs." The show windows are dirty and empty. The passers-by are accustomed to them and never look at them. Ptichkin-Pevichkin was making efforts to see what was hiding behind the muddy glass of a huge show window, although his companion persistently repeated, "The haberdasher is number fifty-four, it is in the third block from my former gymnasium."

At last, here is "gostorg" number fifty-four. Ptichkin-Pevichkin opened the creaking doors and—oh gladness—no buyers are in the shop. A maiden sales clerk, now named the "worker of the counter," stout because of wearing a dozen of warm clothes. But still looking blue from cold, remained motionless holding a cheap "Epoch" cigarette, and tossing only an indifferent glance at the entering couple.

The goods were laid out under the glass of the counter. In some places glass was polished by sleeves of daytime shoppers and the goods were visible. But not all of these goods were interesting, therefore Ptichkin-Pevichkin and his spouse quickly passed by the cheap perfume, powder, metal buttons, needles, stopping only over the dusty glass and discerning with difficulties under the poor illumination, the goods lying deep therein.

At last the spouse cheered him, "Look dear Cockatoo, it seems to me that those are gloves."

"Yes, they look like gloves..."

"And they are made of leather, and look like yours..."

"May be," husband said vaguely, and asked the maiden to show the goods.

Slowly and reluctantly, the sales woman came to the counter and in a hoarse catarrhal voice monotonously pronounced, "We have only size seven..."

"And it is good," exclaimed, gladly, Ptichkin-Pevichkin, "It is just my size!"

The maiden handed over the gloves. Yes, they were made of leather and the surface began to shine after the husband and wife crumpled them several times in their hands checking the quality of the leather.

Having been convinced that the gloves were really from leather, Ptichkin-Pevichkin tried the left glove on, pretending that he did not hear the remark that the buyer had to buy the goods after trying them on because they can be stretched and nobody would buy them.

After trying on Ptichkin-Pevichkin declared, "Wrap them up, I take them."

The sales clerk looked in surprising at the buyer, took off the pinned to the middle finger price label, made a bill, and the happy buyer, after paying to the cashier, went outside with the new gloves, of course, not wrapped but actually crumpled in the indefinable ball.

After they walked ten steps Ptichkin-Pevichkin's spouse asked, "Did you try the

gloves on both hands, dear Cockatoo?"

"No, only on the left..."

"Try on quickly while we are not far from shop. They could be un-paired."

Ptichkin-Pevichkin easily put left glove on but he could not put on the right one.

The spouse was indignant, "Let's go back right now and make them exchange!"

Ptichkin-Pevichkin obeyed the female order and cheerlessly made his way to the *gostorg*. The sales clerk, indifferent as before, met them but roughly answered to the citizen's complaint, "Sold goods are not accepted back!"

"But we just wanted to exchange them," Partridge said.

"We do not have another pair," roughly cut off the sales clerk, and went to her obviously favorite place by the show window.

Flared up Ptichkin-Pevichkin himself, "What an outrage! It is not a trade, it is swindling! Where is the book of complaints? I shall write a complaint!"

"It is in the cash department," sales clerk answered indifferently, and turned away from the buyers.

Ptichkin-Pevichkin addressed the pretty cashier, who did not need to think of freezing in her fur coat. "Give me the book of complaints!"

"The book is locked up and the manager has the key."

"And where is the manager?"

"He will come only in the morning."

"But he ought to be in the shop now."

"Do you think that he will sit in the shop especially for you? Maybe he was called to the office on business."

"Very well," threateningly said Ptichkin-Pevichkin and slamming the doors angrily left the shop with his Partridge.

He was an impressionable man, therefore he dreamed all night about the coming conversation in which, without any doubts, he would be the winner.

In the morning, he went to the shop, but before leaving, he and his wife once again had examined the new thing and had been convinced that the right glove belongs to the size number five. Nonetheless, he tried to squeeze his hand into it and—Oh! What a horror!—the seams split up...

The last circumstance made his mood somewhat worse, but he convinced himself that splitting seams were only obvious proof that gloves were un-paired.

The shop manager was performing his official duties, which means he was in the shop. There were no buyers in the shop, since all the buyers were busy standing in lines to buy products to eat. Therefore, Ptichkin-Pevichkin was lucky to immediately get down to the business conversation.

"I came, comrade shop manager, to talk about the gloves," he started resolutely.

"A a-a! That was you that made a scandal last evening?" attacked him the manager, being prepared in advance. "Do you think to dishonor the Soviet trade? Soviet manufacture? As for you, the Soviet authority swindles? What do you want? Do you want me to believe your counterrevolutionary talk? I have two witnesses – the worker of the counter and the cashier – they will sign the report!"

"What scandal, comrade shop manager?"

"I am not a comrade for you, citizen! Who knows who you are? Making scandal because of some kind of gloves and look, you brought back torn out ones!"

“We have never sold torn out gloves in our shop,” the sales clerk interjected.

“So called ‘buyer!’ Coming and asking to report where the shop manager is during work time!” added the pretty cashier.

Ptichkin-Pevichkin barely broke away from the store and was glad he got off with only the loss of nine rubles and fifty kopeks and with an un-paired pair of gloves.

## A Musical Story

It is certainly difficult to restore in one's mind how these musical desires appeared. Whether Ptichkin-Pevichkin wanted to sing the "Requiem" of Mozart to the accompaniment of his own piano, or whether to run with terrific quickness the chromatic scale on the keyboard with his fingers, and making a few solfeggios, vigorously and sonorously roll asunder "The Thunder of the Victory". Or maybe to recall something from Glinka or Mussorgsky, or simply to limit for the Soviet authority to play romance, "Move away don't look, disappear from my eyes?..." But the desires to practice music persistently pursued him and there was no physical strength to get rid of it. And unfortunately his colleague whispered, "They are expecting the pianos at the Gostorg—the state shop."

And so began the sleepless nights, tasteless dinners, headaches, nervous breakdowns and other indispositions, but all of these were only at home where you could allow full freedom to all of your feelings not satisfied by the poetry of life. Then everyone was walking on their tiptoes; the spouse complains in a whisper about the utter darkness—in one word, it is the best accompaniment to Ptichkin-Pevichkin's mood.

But at work, certainly, like any soviet technical specialist with malicious neurasthenia, he did not show that the heat of the ailment gnaws at him, maybe to death. And he stops the appearance of his musical thoughts immediately with a stern order, "Comrade Bulavochkina, something is wrong with your chrome; check on test № 275324."

Once a week he called from his office to the Gostorg and politely asked, "Will you be kind, tell me please, how long one must wait for the pianos to arrive in your shop?"

He has been getting polite answer for a long time, "The order is already sent..."

In about four months later he suddenly got the answer that the order was accepted. In a couple of more months, they informed him that the instruments have been loaded. Within one-and-one-half more months, he heard the brief and polite answer, "they are on the way..."

At last, "Soon..."

After this answer Ptichkin-Pevichkin stopped calling, but every day dropped into Gostorg № 27, in which all kinds of musical instruments were sold and asked the sales clerks who looked like wood from idleness, about when the instruments would be delivered to Gostorg. For two weeks, he heard the standard monotonous answer, "One of these days, citizen..."

But at last it happened. It was on Saturday. Ptichkin-Pevichkin, out of malice, was especially late because of a damned production meeting and was coming back home when Gostorgs were already closed. However, on Leninskaya Street, on which all main Gostorgs were located, lit up not only his dim from long waiting eyesight, but also his musical soul—at the wall of Gostorg № 27 there were five pianos inside strongly hammered boxes made from simple pine boards.

Comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin forgot about gout, about rheumatism, about

neurasthenia, and ran to the Gostorg. Yes, it is piano, no doubts!

His good mood has arisen and crunching under his feet snow and crackling trees from frost interrupted him for a moment, but after this he imagined how these five fragile creations should stand all night during such cold! In his imagination he heard how the strings were bursting and saw the inactive instrument standing in the corner of his only room. He felt infernal torment that running after the strings could take several more years and that the scores of "The Demon" of Rubinstein, which he loved very much, or the "On the hills of Manchuria" that his spouse loved, would lie on the decrepit shelf and would continue to cover up with a thin layer of dust.

Dinner was even more tasteless, the headache was even stronger, everyone was sitting motionless, and only the wife sighed deeply and silently... It would be just the right time to play, "Requiem" of Mozart!

Night without sleep. Thoughts sometimes catch miraculous sounds—sometimes the crack of strings, sometimes they rise like magic harmony to the heavens, and then suddenly they throw him into rough reality. The eyes are open—greedily they are waiting for the winter dawn. The ears attentively catch the quiet swinging of the pendulum and every sixty minutes his brain marks the time...

Night had hardly started to replace its darkness with a pre-dawn haze, when Ptichkin-Pevichkin jumped out of bed and, in order not to wake up anybody, quietly ran away from the apartment. He wanted to be as soon as possible at the Gostorg № 27. But it was still quite dark and he, stumbling and dashing, brushing against unknown passers-by, was moving ahead to his target, as it seemed to him, too slowly.

However, the dawn took its rights and Ptichkin-Pevichkin started to see perfectly, not only the close objects and people who passed by, but also kilometer-long queues near the bread shops. He saw how these unfortunate people were banging themselves with their hands for warmth and how they were running along the line trying to stomp as hard as they could with their feet to warm them up, and the thought, "Poor people, they seem have been standing here since midnight!"

He recalled his dear Partridge and decided that he is such a big egoist he does not see how long she has to stand in lines during bad weather and frost in order to get either bread, or meat, or sugar, or sometimes boots, sometimes the fabric; he even said aloud to himself that he would present the piano to his wife as an award for all of her torments of staying in lines.

Whether will I buy it? O, yes! Here is Gostorg № 27 and no one is here, not one soul! Only five gentle creations and he!

Ptichkin-Pevichkin felt already the frost in all its might and began to run along the row of shops, trying not to distance himself from Gostorg № 27. However, no matter how slowly the time was flowing, it led the frozen buyer to the open doors of Gostorg. He was the first one... and the last one!

Ptichkin-Pevichkin was patiently waiting while they brought the boxes with pianos inside the store; he let the salesman quietly smoke, and to talk about yesterday's meeting, pretending that he has nowhere to hurry and the little thing that he came to buy was not interesting for him so much; and when the salesman addressed him with a question, "What do you want?" he indifferently replied, "I would like to look at an instrument..."

"What instrument," the sales clerk asked, surprised.

"Piano..." he said, with the same indifference.

"Piano? They are sold citizen, all of them and there is no need to look at them!"

"How they are sold? Is it not true that I was the first one who entered the Gostorg and there are no other buyers here?.."

"They are sold, citizen, you are late..."

"But who could buy them if you just brought them into the Gostorg and there are no buyers besides me here," Ptichkin-Pevichkin continued to insist.

"Who? The chairman of the City Council bought one, the chief of the militia bought another one, the Chief of the financial department bought the third one, the fourth one – the director of city literary department (the censor), and the last one our director of commerce; and they did not send us the sixth. And even if they had sent it, the ordinary buyer would never have got it because we had about thirty requests from the city chiefs!"

"Yes but it is..."

"E-e-e, citizen, people that are higher than you argued with the director of commerce and anyway remained without piano..."

Sad Ptichkin-Pevichkin left the Gostorg. He wanted to play "Requiem" of Mozart and cry.

## They Awarded

The professional union committee was in session. They were distributing permits for the accommodations at the rest resort. It was hard work. Although the accommodations permits were not for the health resort, it was necessary to be on the alert because there are different types of people at the factory. One may have already served the imprisonment term, another could be imprisoned tomorrow; one, never speaks at the meetings, another speaks too often; one is obviously not "ours," another is clearly an alien element. So then, try to distribute it in a way that it would be according to the political class category.

Certainly, it would be possible to give them to some party comrade, but everyone with the party membership card strives to receive permits to the health resort at Sochi-Matsesta, Kislovodsk, or Yalta. But the rest resort is the institution for non-party members!

So the professional union committee has to sweat over these miserable papers. It would be better if these rest resorts did not exist at all.

They were in session an entire week deciding and it seemed they had come to the end, but one permit was left. There was no one to give it to. It was hard work. Only trouble. And if it were not be for comrade Akimov, a member of the factory committee, who offered his chief Ptichkin-Pevichkin as a nominee, the professional union committee would have to be in session three more weeks.

"What about him? Has he a deviation to the old regime?"

"Is he learning the history of the Party?"

"Or maybe he is against the Soviet authority?"

"Or may be he is hiding behind the back of the Soviet authority."

Questions were raised from all the members of the committee and comrade Akimov, so as to not damage his communist reputation, suggested addressing the chief of special department who was also a member of the professional union committee.

The chief rummaged in the special department and reported, "His past is not absolutely clear but at the present he fulfills all assignments, works hard, does not demand payment for overtime, votes correctly, and has worked for seven years without vacations."

"We shall award him!" decided all members of the professional union committee.

They called Ptichkin-Pevichkin and solemnly handed over the permit for the accommodations to the rest resort, but with the warning, "You, comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin, look out and do not blab, because the accommodation is for workers, not for employees or any technical specialists like you!"

That speech jarred Ptichkin-Pevichkin, because his tender eardrum could not accept such informal addressing. But he very quietly accepted the rest resort permit and left. With great patience, he waited to the end of the working day and then he did not run home, but was simply flying on wings. He had scarcely landed on the threshold, cheerfully started to whistle with trills as a nightingale in the spring, and inform his

companion with the news, "My dear Partridge, tomorrow I will sail from the native seashore to the faraway lands. Yeah, yeah, Ptichkin-Pevichkin – fiu-u-u-u!"

Dear Partridge stretched out from astonishment. "What nonsense you are talking dear Cockatoo? New business trip?"

"To the health resort, dear Partridge, to health resort!"

"What? To the health resort?" The companion began to grow furious, "Did you enroll in the Party membership?"

"Who? Me? Member of the party?"

"How else? Who drives around health resorts now? I have never heard that the old technical specialists..."

"Old? Old?" The husband mimicked her, "You see, I had made a little mistake – not to the health resort but to the rest resort... To Odessa, my dear Partridge, to the Black sea..."

"Well, this is still possible, but only strange... Why you?..."

"They noticed... Noticed... After working for seven years without taking breath..."

"Probably the general line is changing," dear Partridge said thoughtfully, serving dinner on the table.

The rest of the day passed in preparations and in the evening, going to bed, Ptichkin-Pevichkin kissed his spouse with unusual tenderness, as if he already was getting on the train.

He lay down in bed. He could not sleep. He turned from side to side, sighed, listened to the clock. How could he sleep now? The vacation, rest resort, Odessa, and the sea... He cannot believe himself—is he Ptichkin-Pevichkin? Is he alive or not? And the clock ticks and every sixty minutes irritates with some mysterious noise and wheezing, after which the clock strikes with the senile cough. It is already after midnight. Clock coughed once then twice, but Ptichkin-Pevichkin still lay in bed with open eyes and thoughts that took him away to the far Odessa...

"Green waves are splashing... Sun is shining brightly... Seagulls, of course... No, not seagulls, it sounds sad... Maybe there are nightingales?... Then evening... Playful Moon..."

He smiles... And gray hair starts to prick in a beard, and demon pushes the rib.

"Nightingale is singing 'tiu-i-tr-r-r-r'... and the waves are running over with the light splash... Moonlight is playing on the surface of the sea... Young lady with the pensive look is sitting on the stony coast... Maiden... No, probably lady is better... And not very young.. But better... about my age..."

Dear Partridge sighed loudly in a dream. "Oh! What am I?... No, no... It is my dear Partridge... But then, why not to flirt a little?... Slightly... Not seriously... Just for the sake of a rest... In fact, nothing bad will happen... Just for the sake of entertainment... And in fact it is boring to be tense all the time... Analyses, assemblies, sessions, meetings... And here for you... How to call her?... Comrade? It is not nice... Madam?... Mademoiselle?... Can she be comrade?... It would be good, if she, ...this darling, was from the past times, but what if she is suddenly from the present ones?... But Comrade – does not suit at all... How one can say it?... Comrade stranger?... But what if she happens to be pretty and very nice... and to call her comrade?..."

Clock croaked five when tired Ptichkin-Pevichkin finally closed his eyes.

Next morning, pale from sleepless night, Ptichkin-Pevichkin, after overcoming all



transport difficulties that usually arise during resort time and after long kisses with his dear Partridge, was entering the overcrowded train car. He stood in the passageway for a long time until at last he could sit on the edge of a bench in one of the compartments. After about three hours he took a more comfortable seat by the window.

Before his eyes were flashing telegraph poles, the wires lines were jumping in zigzags, and rushing towards him were railway boxes, landings, bridges, stations and semi stations. His thoughts were also skipping quickly and discordantly. Now the factory would come to his mind, then dear Partridge; then Ptichkin-Pevichkin muses on earthly bustling, and suddenly the gray hair in his beard pushes him to think about sudden resort encounter with a pretty stranger...

"To call her comrade?.. No, it is absolutely not good! Woman citizen?.. Only a market woman can call buyers like that! Oh, it would be better if she was a young girl! No, an old-fashioned lady... It absolutely sounds ugly – Comrade Roseflower!.. And Comrade Tulip would be absolutely terrible!.. Comrade Carnation, I love you!.. It does sound quite unromantic... Citizen Jasmine, I am madly enamored with you!.. No, no it does not seem like a flirt... It is too formal... it almost smells like at militia precinct... It is different thing to say, 'Madam Hyacinth, your beauty, your cleverness, your kindness and geniality, warmth of your words enslaved me and I must, I am obliged...' Or, 'Mademoiselle Snowdrop, I am fascinated by your beauty...' But what about my dear Partridge?.. Well, it is only a small absolutely tiny flirt and she—Madam or Mademoiselle—would understand it perfectly... And dear Partridge... she, of course should not know about it... Why upset her?.. Everything should remain quiet..."

At this moment the lady that was sitting opposite him dropped her handkerchief. Ptichkin-Pevichkin quickly picked it up and gallantly gave it to the stranger. Some say that handkerchiefs are signs of discord, others, on the contrary, say that handkerchief dropped out of pretty hands promises much more than simple friendship. The second opinion perhaps is more plausible, because between Ptichkin-Pevichkin and the darling stranger conversation began right away about this and that, from where and to where. Ptichkin-Pevichkin, bending his head a little to one side, was listening with great pleasure, and his imagination was flitting in the stifling air as a quick butterfly in the aroma of first spring flowers. The stranger chirped till evening.

Night bound the compartment with darkness, weariness, and sleep and in the morning, passengers, having forgotten yesterday's meetings, hastened to get out of the car so they would reach the streetcar sooner.

At last, here is the rest resort. Groups of the newly arrived vacationers patiently wait for the head physician. They are getting acquainted and are conversing quietly. Some at once are boldly attacking beautiful representatives of human race; the others are cautiously glancing, as if they are choosing an object for future attack. Among the last ones is comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin. You should see, how he stands in front of that small brunette, how closely he listens to her empty chatter, how pleasantly he smiles, how he catches with his eyes her every movement!.. Oh, it is not that Ptichkin-Pevichkin, whom you knew in his native town—always gloomy, tired, hungry, and dissatisfied.

Doctor's arrival however, has interrupted pleasant conversations. Beautiful creatures were invited first for medical examination, and the waiting room at once became boring and empty. Possibly, everyone, as well as comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin, deeply regretted now that he is not the head doctor.

Beautiful creatures disappeared through some other doors and the knights-dreamers did not see them anymore, therefore, doctor's invitation was for them fully unexpected. As for the doctor's visit, it was necessary to be absolutely undressed and Ptichkin-Pevichkin, by the example of others, started to remove his clothes. When naked, he looked timidly around himself and became frightened. Most were working people, muscular and sinewy. He looked neither fish nor fowl—just skin and bones. The intellectual is all you can see!

Also he remembered the warning of the professional union committee at the factory that he should not blab out that he is some kind of technical specialist. Even his mood plunged. He absolutely forgot about beautiful opposite sex. What to tell? And what if they suddenly find out? In fact, for a deceit of a party and the government there can be... And his thoughts went on a rampage—guesses, assumptions, logical reasoning, and consequences, and at last, they came to the organized conclusion! There was no mood for the light flirting anymore. And if they will discover?.. The doctor will look at my naked body and will utter, "The shape of the decayed intellectual!"

"Comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin," the voice that seemed to him fatal was heard from the cabinet.

The nude technical specialist entered into medical court. The head physician sounded him out, tapped out our hero, measured up and down, weighed, for some reason, examined his eyes and little ears, sat at the desk and inquired according to the questionnaire all he needed. Ptichkin-Pevichkin irreproachably answered all the questions until the turn reached the question about his profession.

"Specialty," the doctor asked threateningly.

"The chief of the chemical laboratory," with a guilty gentle smile said softly the naked technical specialist.

"So why did you arrive under the workers permit? I can not accept you, go home!"

"The factory professional union committee awarded me!"

"I can not..."

"There were no other available permits..."

"It does not concern me. I can not..."

"I am seven years without vacation..."

"It is not my business..."

"They awarded me..."

"I can not, comrade Ptichkin-Pevichkin... I can not lose my work because of you."

"But what should I do?"

"Go home and ask your factory professional union committee to give you the permit for the technical specialists..."

Sad Ptichkin-Pevichkin left medical cabinet, got dressed and went to the station...

## Red-cheeked Trousers

The summer break began. The doors and windows of the Educational Training Center were tightly shut. Silence fell upon the building. The teachers left and locked themselves in their poky little rooms, and the lucky ones—in tiny flats. There was no place to go. And why go anywhere when hunger reigns everywhere. But, here in Donbas<sup>1</sup> where teachers get their rations with food cards AP equally with the underground workers-miners, you won't starve to death.

We rarely meet, and when we do, it is only to exchange a few bleak phrases and part. Well, there is nothing to talk about! Each has neither his problems nor his personal interests, but rather thoughts, which although are absolutely common to all, yet talk about them simply is not customary.

Heat. Sultry air. Everyone is trying to hide some place where one could breathe even a little bit of fresh air. But, steppe is all around. The hot dry eastern wind raises coal dust into a swirling pillar and carries it through the miners' hamlet, penetrating into cramped dwellings. No one dares to leave this place because here people do not die from hunger.

My neighbor is a music teacher, an artist from Odessa.<sup>2</sup> Do you get it, from Odessa!! To be here, at this time, in the miners' hamlet and suffocating from heat and coal dust!!! Yes, a musician from a hungry Odessa!

The scene catches your eye involuntarily—the temperature reaches forty Centigrade, but my dearest neighbor is dragging himself into the workers co-op in his fall coat made in 1910! Do not think from this that it does not look well. My soviet coat that I was able to obtain three years ago looks like a hundred years old piece of bullshit! But my neighbor's coat—only the style shows its age, otherwise, it looks like it was just out from a store. Yes, exactly, from a store. And mine – from workers co-op. And another difference is that the neighbor had bought his coat and I—obtained mine when they were “giving out.”<sup>3</sup> Maybe that is the reason that my coat has no style at all.

About an hour and a half later the neighbor comes back. I meet him in the stairwell.

“Are you all right Aleksey Alekseyevich? Are you ill? You are dressed too warm for this weather...”

“Yes my dearest.... No-o-o, comrade,” he smiled, “I have got the chills...” And after looking around, he looked at me trying to guess my mood. Not finding anything suspicious, he turned towards me his back, picked up his coat tails and bent, showing me red patches in the most conspicuous spots. “Have you seen red-cheeked trousers? No? Well, now you can look at them, get an eyeful of this art, I won't deny you to have this pleasure! But be quiet, not a peep! Not a word to anyone, because for the red color on this spot they can pin counterrevolution on you! Do you get me?”

We laughed and parted.

The story of red-cheeked trousers is quite simple.

Aleksey Alekseyevich sent his wife to take groceries to Odessa, where she

traveled once in a while in order to preserve their “housing space”—a small room on the Derebasovsky Street. Very important street and all non-workers were being evicted from it; thus my neighbor’s wife had to visit “her home” only to show that she is a worker who lives in Odessa.

The last time Aleksey Alekseyevich was seeing his wife off, he went overboard while picking up a suitcase filled with groceries and his trousers had ripped in the most interesting spots. When he came home he began searching in his wife’s storage box trying to find a piece of black fabric, but he could find nothing except the red scrap. The workers cooperative was not “giving out” trousers. He had to sew red fabric under on the wrong side, covering it with trousers’ scraps and mending it with black thread.

Aleksey Alekseyevich remained calm for the first week, but on the second week he had to wear his coat because the red fabric started to show through. He could not mend more over it.

The delicate soul of the artist was suffering immensely due to these red-cheeked trousers. This experience was such a trauma for the musician who used to dress elegantly before revolution. His suffering left him on the brink of tears.

“Damn it! One can’t buy trousers in such a huge country! And what am I supposed to wear on stage?!” he cried with indignation when, getting prepared for the performance, he had to “rent” from his engineer neighbor the trousers that were a little too long and a little too wide.

Wiping off a tear, he thanked his lender wholeheartedly.

## An Ingenious Dummy

A new girl, Ulyasha, appeared at the drafting bureau. Of course, she had no idea about drafting, nor did she understand nor could she do anything. She only wandered around the office asking herself and wondering, what for are these funny either desks or tables – no idea; and what are these long-long rulers and some kinds of shining, like medical, instruments? Apprehensively she watched the young and old men sitting on the high stools and drawing some kind of funny pictures. On her first days at work she walked without finding herself a place from one man to another, handing them a piece of beautiful paper or a long ruler, or something else she had never seen before. And the men wondered why they took the silly girl at the time when the bureau badly needed draftsmen. But then in a whisper the rumor spread around the bureau, “Through acquaintance!.. She had a pull...”

In a week the girl was attached to a whiskered man, “Teach her.”

And soon Ulyasha started tracing drawings and reproducing blueprints, she learned what meant blueprint, tracing-cloth, Whatman paper, curves, compasses and many other things she had never seen and heard about during her short life, and of course, never knew.

There was no lunch break at the office. So the employees ate between this and that. And lunches were nothing special. Some had a bite to take the edge off hunger, the others to be content with glancing at the meager meals of the neighbor and tightening their belts until the end of the working day. They realized that the building of socialism was not a joke. It required sacrifice. Nobody said how much and what exactly had to be sacrificed, they just simply sacrificed with what one could – with their health, with freedom, and some even with life. And what about Ulyasha? What one could take from the foolish girl? She had just got off the school desk! She did not realize that every citizen, personally loving comrade Stalin, had to make a sacrifice. For all of this she was given a nickname a “dummy.”

She would be probably called that way her whole life, because once appearing such nicknames usually have a power to accompany persons till their death, whatever way they turned their steps.

Ulyasha was certainly not aware of her nickname, as nobody called her by it in her face. But after she had grown familiar with the bureau routine, she made such a discovery, equal to which was not made, neither by Ramsin, nor by super-marxist Lysenko, nor Tupolev, nor Pavlov, or anybody else who was awarded with great prizes, titles and medals with other rewards – money, passes for accommodations in the luxury health resorts, summer houses for their inventions, etc.

Probably, also in the Kremlin they thought of her, “What that kind of a dummy could invent?!”

She used to bring a thin slice of bread and a bottle of lemonade to lunch. The draftsmen wondered how the protégé of the factory Party secretary could eat such lean food, but later they found out that Ulyasha’s mother was an ordinary charwoman.

Working for an important man she dared to ask him to get a job for her daughter, pulling strings. Of course, it cost him nothing to pass by the drafting bureau and to “ask for a favor.” Who could deny such a trifle to the Party member? And Ulyasha started earning some valueless money.

Eating her lunch in a secluded corner of the bureau, she accidentally spilled some lemonade on the tracing-cloth and while in a hurry cleaning it up discovered something wonderful under the wet spot. Cutting off a strip of cloth she brought it home, washed it and obtained a beautiful piece of some kind of a white fabric that she did not know the name. And how could she know it, if she had not seen anything on the shelves of the State shops except a coat of dust, probably, thick more than one inch! However, the obtained fabric attracted her attention so much that on the next day she cut off a big piece of tracing-cloth, put it in her school bag she brought her lunch in and took it home. After washing, the piece of tracing-cloth turned into a length of a fine white fabric which with the help of her mother she used to sew for herself a beautiful blouse during the weekend.

In a month or two the whole town was gay with white blouses, and to find the tracing-cloth for the drafting bureau they had to go to neighboring towns and to the regional center, because one could not find the tracing-cloth, neither in industry drafting bureaus nor in the only stationery shop in town.

Thus, it happened once that the town girls wore new white blouses, although they were not “given out,” sold in the state shops. Probably the most remarkable invention of that time remained unknown for the Central Committee of the Party and for the comrade Stalin personally.

Thank God.

Since then colleagues called Ulyasha “ingenious dummy.”<sup>1</sup>

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## **Addition to the Story “The Ingenious Dummy”**

In the newspaper “Russia” of July 14, 1971 was published the humorous story “The Ingenious Dummy” by O. Mikhailov. As the readers may remember, it narrated about the girl named Ulyasha, who working in a drafting bureau, to say it simply, was stealing blueprints and tracing-cloth, washed them at home from the chemicals and sewed blouses for herself.

Unfortunately, there is not always everything in life a harmless joke. We don’t know whether the story by Mikhailov is based upon the real occurrence, but we know a similar fact that happened in Moscow in one of the science-research institutes of the Red Army. But it took a bad turn for the “hero” of the similar invention.

This occurred in the middle of the nineteen hundred thirties and in this research institute a simple girl worked as an archivist in the depository department. The girl, let’s call her Vera, found out a secret, how to make a length of good fabric from the dusty old drafts preserved on the tracing-cloth, which she used then to sew nice handkerchiefs. In the Soviet Union these were the years when it was nearly impossible to buy anything in the shops, and decent girls could not blow their noses without a handkerchief – as some blew onto the ground with two fingers on the nose. Vera took sometimes the small tracing-cloth copies home and used them for sewing handkerchiefs, she didn’t even

dream about the blouses.

It is difficult to say now, whether she herself spilled the beans or somebody spied on her, but once after work she was searched in the guard box and a piece of used tracing-cloth was found in her bag. She was accused of plundering of socialist property and theft of military secrets, although those drafts and plans were ten years old and held no value. The trial was "swift and fair" and for several handkerchiefs Vera was sent to the concentration camps for many years. Reading such seemingly funny stories, it hurts when one remembers that the main characters of them were the real victims of the Stalin's terror.

## A Socialist Lunch

There was a man once. Not a man, really – just something or other. Rotten intelligentsia.<sup>1</sup> Neither a tool of the proletariat, nor a devil's poker. He evaded everything. One thing after another. Now he was evading the high rank of "an enemy of the people," and then the very low rank of a good Soviet non-Party Bolshevik. The latter is, according to our understanding, natural enough for a non-Party member but, to tell you the truth, it's so obscene, making one's flesh creep.

His evasion brought him, that man, or some kind of a "rotten intelligentsia," to such far-off corners of his fatherland that he felt sometimes quite lost in the geographical space. Still, his revolutionary spirit never lost its orientation in modern governance, and whenever it was possible to return to some normal existence, he performed that return with a skill that was quite extraordinary. In other words, he got perfectly proficient in the political situation, and maneuvered his way quite adequately through the primordial force of the socialist government.

He – this man – was called Nikanor Glazovich. The patronymic part of his name got modified in a far-off Ukrainian hamlet bearing the proud name of "Stalin's Viper," with which a few naive peasants were trying to cover themselves, for a time, from the advancing on them wave of collectivization. That's where the above-mentioned man was teaching their kiddies, while waiting for some clearing in the political weather and avoiding any honorific title that might be attached to his name, with all ensuing consequences of some pleasant institutions busy in dishonoring honest citizens of Sovdepia, as it was called sarcastically the Soviet land.

Arriving for his first lesson, that man informed the little souls in his charge: "My name is Nikanor Vlasovich." Whether this patronymic was difficult, or whether the little souls were slow to get it, but one white-haired comrade pupil addressed his teacher immediately: "Nikanor Glazovich". Since then, this "rotten intelligentsia" presented himself among its colleagues exclusively as "Nikanor Glazovich," explaining in great detail the revolutionary origin of pronunciation of his name.

When the political situation in the countryside became too outrageously hungry and the peasants were moved by the thousands to the far North<sup>2</sup> to build socialism there and their orphaned kiddies got bloated from hunger, Nikanor Glazovich decided to migrate to the nearest worker area, where the nourishment was quite satisfactory. To starve, as one might say, to death was not an option there.

He arrived to a certain mining educational establishment and rather easily got a position as a mathematics teacher.

It must be noted, that Nikanor Glazovich was unmarried and nourished himself in a commercial eatery with the gorgeous sign "The Narpit Restaurant."<sup>3</sup>

Once, on the occasion of feeling hungry, he announced to his colleagues in the teacher's room, "Going to feed myself!" and he proceeded to tie his galoshes with bits of string, so as not to lose them along socialist road.

In the commercial diner, alias "The Narpit Restaurant," the air was, as is usual,



thick to suffocation with tobacco smoke, the floor was covered with spittle up to one's ears; the loud radio glorifications of "X" leader was shaking the low and dark Narpit hall. Waitresses in dirty aprons pushing through customers crowd, splashed them with socialist delicacies, bringing to the consumer sometimes half, sometimes a quarter of his allotted portion. The hungry visitors endured it all silently.

Nikanor Glazovich elbowed his way through the crowd successfully and to his great pleasure, he even acquired a seat at a table without waiting in line. An acquaintance, who got tired waiting for his lunch, let him to have his chair. Nikanor Glazovich sat there for some half an hour, watching the customers and, before he could come to any practical conclusions, a waitress pushed through to his table to find out the reason for his sitting there.

Nikanor Glazovich ordered, of course, the necessary food, which was as standard as Soviet footwear or clothes – the soup and the roast – then he went back to his observation and meditation. Not another half-hour has passed when both standard dishes appeared before him.

The famished intellectual started to swallow greedily the tepid muddy liquid called soup, while casting glances at the second plate with a certain mass of indeterminate color, whose unpretentious name, according to the menu card standing on the table, was "Home Roastery."

At the moment when just two or three more scoops of the crooked Narpit spoon remained till the final annihilation of the soup and to begin the second dish, a certain event came about that made him pause his feeding.

The nondescript citizen sitting across the table, having successfully finished his feeding, wiped his mouth with the paper towel supplied with the meal (such sensitive care for the consumer!) and got up from the table with great satisfaction on his face. With a lightning speed his place was taken by another one, but with a visage expressing great dissatisfaction – even hunger. He grabbed Nikanor Glazovich's plate with the above-mentioned "Home Roastery" and impudently swallowed its contents with such rapidity that the poor "rotten intellectual" had no time to come to his senses. In short, both of them finished their feeding at the same time.

Nikanor Glazovich looked at his opponent and read in his eyes the same thing that could be read at that time in the eyes of millions of ordinary peasants who fled from the villages to the industrial areas, escaping the "prosperous" collective farms life...

Half-hungry and distressed, Nikanor Glazovich returned to his work duties...

## The Most Democratic Election

The poor western citizen has many difficulties. And not only the common ones but, so to say, difficulties of state importance. Let's say that in the state of England an election of government occurs. The mortal citizen must solve the destiny of his fatherland—who should be in the authority today. And there is a need to solve it because a lot of parties exist over there. For example, to elect Experts led by Mr. Attlee or Co-operators with Sir Churchill? Experts, clearly, say very softly, "Yours is mine and mine is mine," therefore they take away the private property (so far only the large one)—it is their specialty. Co-operators instead promise much and they are ready to be in full co-operation with the "Esesera."<sup>1</sup> So, how to know who is better and for whom one has to give his vote?

The voting affair in the "Esesera" is much better organized. There is only one name of a dear candidate that is printed on the voting paper ballot and the soviet citizen does not have to be lost in thoughts, because all the rest could only be the cheap candidates.

Once, there were elections in town. They were electing the Supreme Soviet. And it was the election according to the most democratic Stalin's system. As it is usually necessary in such cases, the campaign was announced. Under the ballyhoo of laudation to the "dear and loving Father Stalin" the suspicious element was quietly removed in order not to undermine one hundred per cent attendance of the electorate; the town was divided into districts, the election commissions were appointed, and all Party and Komsomol<sup>2</sup> workers were ordered to watch the non-party members. In the newspapers, the candidates were presented and all kinds of fables about them were printed—to tell it short, the work was overflowing the limits.

Finally, the elections were started. Comrades were watching the citizens, citizens were glancing with fear at the comrades and, according to the most democratic elections procedures, they voted for the only candidate whose name was printed in their paper ballot.

Kolya Polyakov, the employee of the editorial office of the local newspaper, was a member of the elections commission. He watched and took notes of the citizens, then reported to the editorial office the percentage of voters appearing to vote—he was happy with the Young Communists pride to have the successful election in his district. And before they started to count votes, he thought to become the "stakhanovite."<sup>3</sup>

Absolutely one hundred per cent of voters were present. (Try, citizen, not to come!) But one paper ballot, as a spoonful of tar, has spoiled the whole election campaign not only in his district but all over the town. An unknown citizen using ink pen deleted the dear candidate's name and wrote the deceased Tsar's name, "Nikolay II."

Kolya Polyakov ran to the editorial office and reported, "Only one vote is missing! One citizen, the 'enemy of the people,' has spoiled the paper ballot! He brought down the one hundred per cent voting rate! He deleted the name of the Most Wise!<sup>4</sup> He wrote-in an old regime candidate! See, what he wanted! The Tsar-father! And at what year of the

happy socialist life! That counterrevolutionary hydra!..”

Kolya was telling about this incident clearly, proving his every word with the convictions—expressing all of his Young Communist indignation. And the editor frowned, as a horned owl, and with sepulchral voice, uttered the absolute party truth, “It is required to shoot all the mass of the non-party folks, because of them we cannot anticipate the life of paradise even in one thousand years!..”

The unfortunate news, of course, spread at the speed of light through all Komsomol-party line. All members of the party—candidates, sympathizers and Komsomol members—got agitated, even members of school-age Pioneers and children of October organizations<sup>5</sup> got agitated. What to talk about the children of October, when even non-party citizens became agitated because it was well known what kind of consequences could happen.

The mighty power was nervous and tried to find various ways to catch the transgressor of the most democratic election. They established the strict supervision over the criminal district, they established a vigilant eye and ear after every citizen, they began digging out everybody’s cherished secrets, they even appointed to the post offices special controllers to check out the letters to find the dangerous enemy by his handwriting.

They ransacked about half a year, dug, opened letters, clapped with their ears, blinked with their eyes, but could not find the transgressor of the most democratic election in the world. Whether he ran away or sank into water—it remains unknown.

## The Mocking Fate

Sergey Ivanovich Gasevsky is pacing up and down his spacious office and dictating an Explanatory Note to his project for the construction of a "Palace of Culture," thinking at the same time, "Can't get away in time today... That accursed meeting... And tomorrow – all that dissembling and acting against one's conscience at the ballot-box... Oh yes, sure enough... Voting for a candidate to the Supreme Soviet!.."

"Ta-ta-tra-ta-ta," the typist Vera Alexandrovna, a girl of about twenty-two keeps rattling on, while daydreaming, "If only those meetings could disappear! If one could take a walk in the fresh air instead!.."

"Sergey Ivanovich!" she addressed the engineer, "How could I arrange to miss the meeting?"

"Miss the meeting?" Sergey Ivanovich was startled, even frightened, as if somebody had eavesdropped on his private thoughts.

"That's your youth speaking! A date, is that it?"

"What date, Sergey Ivanovich, all the young men are so drab and boring now, all they talk about is politics..."

"And you'd like to be about love?"

"Who's there to fall in love with? I'd just like to finish your Explanatory Note soon, and get out into the street to inhale some fresh air. But just look: on Monday – there's a youth rally; on Tuesday – the local committee meeting; on Wednesday – a production conference; on Thursday – the collective agreement validation; on Friday – Party history study, and today is Saturday and the trust's general meeting. And tomorrow – the elections. That's every day, and before nine or ten o'clock one cannot get out of here! So when can one, if not live, at least breathe a little?"

"Well, Vera Alexandrovna, who will be building socialism if not you young people?! Even we, the older people, keep working and do not grumble, because we understand..."

"Whatever you older people do, but I am still young, I want to breathe, breathe, breathe, Sergey Ivanovich, and not to be stifled in all those meetings of the mestcoms,<sup>1</sup> the profcoms,<sup>2</sup> the osoviakhims,<sup>3</sup> the moprakhs<sup>4</sup> and the study circles...<sup>5</sup>"

"What one has started, one should finish," answered the old engineer, and thought, "Is she pulling my leg?"

Having heard some steps in the corridor, he resumed his loud dictation. The typist pretended to be absorbed with her work... The door opened, and a brisk draftsman, who had recently been elected as the trade union representative of the design bureau, appeared at the threshold.

"Comrades, to the meeting!.."

"I cannot go now, I must finish the Explanatory Note today because tomorrow the director is going to the center."

"But you are making the people wait!.."

"Report to those who are responsible that this work is urgent... The director knows it..."

"Don't you know that the elections are tomorrow?"

"I know, I know, but the Explanatory Note must be finished today."

"Maybe after the meeting?"

"Thanks but no thanks! The meeting will end at ten or twelve, and I still have three or four hours worth of work here!"

"Very well, I'll ask the partorg,"<sup>6</sup> he declared reluctantly and disappeared.

"The activist!" muttered the typist through her teeth, "And do you know, Sergey Ivanovich, who you'll be voting for?"

"Certainly, one couldn't miss it—for some two or three months there've been all those photos and bios in the town's newspaper.."

"The lauding and extolling of the town's very best woman, the one-hundred percent stakhanovite,<sup>7</sup> the purebred worker, the sensitive and just, our dearest Maria Ivanovna Chuykova, yes?" Vera Alexandrovna asked.

The engineer was beginning to be afraid of this attractive young woman, and immediately switched to his business-like tone.

"Now, Vera Alexandrovna, let us better get back to work, or else you may go to the meeting, and I'll try somehow to type this with one finger..."

But the typist couldn't be quelled. She asked, almost in a whisper, "And do you know what the partorg Gusev called her?" and not awaiting his answer, she said it: "A moron!"

"Vera Alexandrovna, stop it."

"No, I am talking seriously. I was sitting in the director's office and typing something. That was when nobody knew anything about the elections yet. Gusev comes in and asks, 'Were you at the active members meeting yesterday?' 'No,' the director says, 'I just came back from the center today...' 'Do you know who was nominated to the Supreme Soviet by the regional Party committee, the oblpartmentcom?'<sup>8</sup> 'No...' 'Chuikova from the Red Metallist factory!' 'Which Chuikova?' 'That moron who carries on with the agitprop chief.' 'Oh, I know, but she's as stupid as a fish!' 'Then it's one or the other – either the oblpartmentcom wanted to please its agitprop chief, or the Supreme Soviet needs some fishes...' But that conversation was long ago, Sergey Ivanovich, I just said it by the way..."

"Now, enough of that nonsense. Do you know what can be the consequences of such talk?"

"But you are 'our person!'" the typist said naively.

"What do you mean 'our person?' Do you realize what you're saying? You stop that babble right now, or else..."

Vera Alexandrovna raised her large intelligent eyes to him, and the old engineer thought that she was probably babbling with the sole purpose to avoid going to the meeting. But he did not suggest this to her, and started dictating in a stern voice, frowning as if he were angry.

The typist was rattling rapidly, only stopping at the rare intervals when Sergey Ivanovich had to think for a while before continuing his note... But the thoughts of the old engineer at such moments were really on something else than his project, "One can't get out of the building – there's that Cerberus at the door, a *hayduk*, 'his majesty' Gusev. I'll have to go to the meeting anyway... I just have to delay it... In any case, I can't get away before ten or eleven... And tomorrow? I will fall sick! Now, that's an idea! I'm lying

in bed, with a bandage around my head, I won't get dressed... Great! They won't raise a sick man, will they?"

He wanted to ask the typist whether they might bring the ballot box to him if he is lying sick in bed, but then he decided that they had been too candid today as it was.

"Indeed, voting for some moron! No, my dears, you've mocked the old man enough! It was different in old days—instead of voting, people were breathing the fresh air... And the young people were not drab and boring then as now... And there was time for love... Of course there were politicians then, too... And now their successors..."

The door opened again. The brisk draftsman was checking, "Well, how it is with you, how long do you have, now?"

"Enough for a couple of hours," the annoyed engineer replied, continuing his dictation.

The typist, narrowing her eyes, followed the departing union representative with an unkind gaze. After he had closed the door behind him, she asked, in mock imitation, "What about you, is your meeting for long yet?" Then, addressing the engineer, she said, "Pardon me, Sergey Ivanovich, I can't help myself anymore, they are all so repulsive!"

The engineer, pretending not to hear her, went on with his dictation, stubbornly repeating to himself all the while, "But I won't go! I won't! I won't!"

Vera Alexandrovna, seeing the engineer frowning, fell silent and began angrily to pound the typewriter keys. Once in a while she paused and asked him to repeat a sentence.

The draftsman butted in two more times before they finished, at last, the ill-fated Explanatory Note.

"Well, now you go to the meeting, and I'll check what you have typed and prepare the drafts for the director," Sergey Ivanovich told the girl, after she had cleaned up her desk.

"It would be better if you lowered me from the window to the sidewalk, then I would go home to Mommy..."

"Never mind, go, you'll rest tomorrow."

"But we'll still have to vote for the moron? There, too, there will be a waiting line. The activists will pester us all to go early in the morning."

"Vera Alexandrovna, for God's sake, stop talking like that, go in peace. You understand... You're not a little girl, you must understand what one can say and what one can't."

"Sergey Ivanovich, to you one can say anything, can't one?" the typist said again as naively as before, and with such a simple, childish smile, that the old engineer laughed and said, "You know, Vera Alexandrovna, better not say anything to anyone, you'll be... safer. Better go now..."

The young woman, appearing downcast, left the office.

It was already about nine in the evening when engineer Gasevsky, the trust's design bureau chief, entered the Red Corner—recreation and reading room—where the meeting was held. Activists were making speeches.

"That means the regular speakers have already finished," Sergey Ivanovich thought, sitting down on the bench in the last row. Breathing was difficult in the hall, due to the "hundred percent attendance" of the trust employees; dense clouds of tobacco smoke floated slowly overhead. Most people were sitting with their heads lowered, to

avoid eye contact with the chairman Gusev, who was vigilantly watching “the mood of the masses.” The tired faces, perspiring in the stuffy air, expressed indifference, except for those who, while not listening to the orator on the podium, were eagerly awaiting the end of the speech, to raise their hand as fast as possible and get to speak in their turn.

“Same speeches, same words,” Sergey Ivanovich was thinking. “Party purity,” “a worthy candidate,” “vote unanimously,” “hundred percent attendance...” Of course, the town has been purged clean already for this one hundred percent attendance... “The untrustworthy ones are all for a long time in the NKVD cells, the rest have been warned—just you dare not to attend.” And some imp was nudging him, “So what? I will try... I’ll not just try, I really won’t go... What if a man is dying? Would he still have to go and vote?... For the moron?... That Gusev told the truth... They do need only fishes there, just fishes, to vote ‘yes’ by jerking their floats—it would be even better if they were mechanical fishes... That’s a job for Ramzin—the poor fellow will surely invent them if he’s ordered!”

So thought the engineer Gasevsky, sitting far from scrutiny, far from the podium, and he did not even hear the speeches, the addresses, the harangues of the endless series of orators. At last, an uneasy silence interrupted his reverie.

“So, comrades, who’s next?” the chairman of the meeting was asking persistently. But everybody was silent. Everybody wished the meeting to be over, so that one could get home and get some rest after thirteen hours spent in the trust building. The chairman, however, was not satisfied with the number of speeches, and he started calling them by names.

“Comrade Serdyuk, apparently you wanted to say something?”

“Well, no, comrade Gusev, it is all pretty clear by now...”

“Comrade Zueva, you have something to tell the meeting, don’t you?”

Zueva, a Communist Party member, liked to speak last, and to speak after being invited. Her speeches were devoid of both subjects and predicates, and were quite incomprehensible.

“As for me, comrades, you all understand... Repeating, you know already... That the Communist Party and our beloved leader...”

“Thank God, the end is near,” thought the engineer and looked at his watch. It was approaching eleven. “Oh-oh! God willing, we can get out before midnight and reach home today, not tomorrow!” and he became oblivious again to his surroundings, immersed in his own thoughts...

Meanwhile, the hall continued to resound with “stakhanovite,” “the best candidate,” “Party unity,” “one hundred percent attendance,” “all united,” “give our votes to the best woman of our town, of our region,” “to our dear Stalin...”

“For the moron, for the fish,” Gasevsky went on thinking, and his imagination painted a picture, “The Supreme Soviet hall is filled with water. The members are all fishes, sitting in floating chairs. The Presidium podium is an underwater rock, occupied by Stalin & Co. Stalin himself is as a lobster, he is swirling his moustaches and timorously swiveling his bulging eyes—are there enemies in the meeting hall?... They are voting, ‘Who is in favor of Stalin being beloved, wise, our teacher, our father, a genius, and a generalissimo?’

“All the members, all the fishes, raise their fins and ecstatically applaud, slapping their tails, and greedily gulp the oxygen-depleted water. One little fish makes an attempt

to rise to the surface for a gulp of fresh air, but a peremptory shout with a thick Georgian accent resounds in the hall, “Fr-r-r-y him!”. After that the frightened smatterer-seminary dropout munches the little fish, cautiously spitting out the bones.”

“On this, I am concluding, comrades,” Gusev’s shrill voice is heard. “Everyone in favor, please raise your hands...”

With his hand up, Gasevsky is thinking, “So what is this, even Zueva has finished? And what are we voting for? But what difference does it make?”

It was approaching midnight when his apprehensive wife opened the door, “I was thinking you may have been...”

“Thinking, thinking... I am tired and ravenous as a wolf... What, isn’t Lenchka home yet?” he inquired about their daughter, as he entered the room.

“She’s at Mashen’ka Kudryavtseva’s birthday party. She promised to be home by midnight... And what made you so late?”

“What, don’t you know that tomorrow... we’re electing the moron?” and Sergey Ivanovich told his wife everything he had heard from the typist about the “worthy candidate.”

“But I won’t go voting tomorrow!”

“What, Seryozhen’ka?! Don’t you know what all this may end up with?”

“I can take no more, darling, I am fed up with all this acting against one’s conscience!”

“But think of us, at least...”

“I’ll be sick, you understand? Here, I am lying like a log and cannot get up!”

“What are you saying—they may call a doctor in and decide you’re feigning!”

“Don’t you worry, I’ve thought of everything...”

“Oh, Seryozhen’ka, this is dangerous business...”

“Never mind, you’ll go and vote, and I’ll be in bed... I can’t take it any more, do you understand? Enough of this mockery!”

There was a knock on the door. Zinaida Leontievna went out to open it and came back with their daughter. She wished she could convince her husband that his plan was too risky, but they couldn’t continue this conversation in the presence of the daughter.

Out of the large apartment that Gasevsky had occupied before the revolution, only one room was left to him and his family now. It served as the kitchen and the dining room, also as the living room, and as Sergey Ivanovich’s office, and as their common bedroom. Such life was very hard at first, but with the passing years, they got accustomed to the congestion and the discomfort. Unpleasant as the situation was, acquiring an apartment in the town was out of the question. The first priority was for the power-holders; after them—Party members, activists, stakhanovites, shock workers—no living space was left for anyone else. The old engineer knew that and did not even try to ask.

At night, he would partition the room by hanging old blankets on ropes – that made a separate bedroom for everybody. Time and again, he would say to his wife, “See, we’ve already overtaken America—every citizen has a universal room. What are American skyscrapers compared to that! But of course, they are capitalists out there! And here—the devil himself does not know who I am.” And he hesitated, unable to categorize himself.

In the morning, Sergey Ivanovich woke up and indeed felt as if he had some



headache and even something like a slight fever.

"What the devil, have I caught a cold?" he thought, "Yesterday at that meeting, it was far too warm, and then I went out into the frost at once... Is it that I got the chill?"

"Zinochka, give me a thermometer, please," he asked his wife.

Zinaida Leontievna got the thermometer out of a drawer, brought it into her husband's "bedroom", tenderly touched his forehead, and she felt that there may be a slight fever indeed. But after measuring the temperature, Sergey Ivanovich got convinced that the chill solution would not work. He started sighing heavily and groaned softly.

"Well?" asked his spouse solicitously.

"An incredible headache, but no fever," he answered, speaking as someone who is feeling very sick. "I cannot understand myself what is the matter with me... It could be nervous overstrain... Can you give me a towel, please... I'll bandage my head... Maybe that would make me feel better..."

"And what about the voting, Seryozhen'ka? We must go, you know..."

"What kind of voting could there be, Zinochka, what are you saying, my dear! My head is all cracking as if a hundred devils were beating drums in it, I can't get up, oh-oh!..."

"But you understand yourself that it is necessary..."

"I just can't get up, I'd never get there..."

"Mama," Lenochka interjected, "but if the person is sick, how can he get up?"

"But they'll ask about him there, they will..."

"But you can say that Papa is very sick, can't you?" the daughter answered, not understanding her father's game.

"I don't know what will happen... I'll go by myself..."

"Yes, darling, yes – go yourself," responded Sergey Ivanovich, pleased with her decision, and bandaged his head tightly.

The alarmed Zinaida Leontievna went to the election center, leaving her husband in the care of their daughter.

When she approached the desk where incoming voters were registered, and submitted her passport, the registrator looked into the voter list of the Eight district and asked, "And your husband?"

"He is sick, he could not come..."

The registrator called up a member of the electoral commission. "Comrade Polyanov," he addressed him, "we have an unpleasant situation here, the voter Gasevsky is sick... There will be no one hundred percent participation..."

"What is the matter with him?" asked Polyanov, approaching Zinaida Leontievna.

"I don't know, he has a terrible headache, he cannot get up..."

"We'll organize this, wait a little."

He ran away somewhere and ten minutes later, opening a car door for citizen Gasevskaya to get in, along with another member of the electoral commission and the physician on duty, he was saying, "You see, the Party and the government extend maximum care to all the voters... I believe the doctor will help citizen Gasevsky, and, unless he is seriously sick, he will be able to come and to do his civic duty..."

Nervously Zinaida Leontievna thanked the solicitous Polyanov, while thinking in panic, "I knew it, they'll diagnose him as a simulator—he'll be sacked, he'll be arrested..."

My God, what has Sergey done?"

For Gasevsky, this was an unexpected visit, but he did not lose self-control, continuing his heavy sighs and groans. The young physician took his temperature, counted his pulse, palpated his stomach, and said, after sounding his lungs and heart, "A grave case of nervous exhaustion!"

The electoral commission member interrupted him impatiently. "Is there a fever?"

"In such cases there's never any fever," the physician answered.

"Very well," he addressed Gasevsky, "a trip in the car can even do you good... You also need rest, regular meals, fresh air and tranquility, citizen Gasevsky..."

Zinaida Leontievna apprehensively watched the electoral commission member who was looking unceremoniously over the room.

As soon as Sergey Ivanovich appeared with his wife at the election center, Polyanov ran up to him and, breaking apart the line of voters at the registration desk, asked them to let through, out of turn, the sick citizen Gasevsky.

A correspondent of the town's local newspaper, having heard the name of the sick voter, was painfully trying to recall where it was that he has heard the name Gasevsky; and just in case, he took his photograph at the moment when he was lowering his ballot-paper into the box.

While Sergey Ivanovich, buttoning his old winter coat, was making his way through the crowd towards his spouse, the inquisitive reporter interrogated Zinaida Leontievna, "And where is your husband working?"

"In the trust... he's an engineer..."

"Oh, yes, yes, I know... Do you live in a large apartment?"

"Yes, our room is large..."

"Your family?"

"We have a daughter, Lenchka. She's seventeen..."

"You are well-off? But what am I asking! Your husband is an engineer, of course he receives a substantial salary!"

Sergey Ivanovich approached.

"Pardon me, comrade Gasevsky, you are not feeling quite well?"

"A splitting headache... and a terrible weakness..."

Polyanov ran up to them.

"Citizen Gasevsky, please forgive us for disturbing you when you are so unwell... Nervous exhaustion... In the name of the electoral commission, I wish to express our sympathy and gratitude... You know, one hundred percent participation... The car is ready, I hope you'll arrive home with no problems..."

Sergey Ivanovich continued to sigh and from time to time he grabbed his head, squeezing his temples.

"Not at all!.. There can be no question of gratitude... this is a duty..." he told Polyanov.

"Yes, certainly, for someone in good health, but of course it is a little hard when one is sick..." The electoral commission member continued to shower compliments on Gasevsky, while accompanying him to the car.

On his return, Lenchka was looking inquiringly at her father. Zinaida Leontievna was silent. Sergey Ivanovich, having taken off his coat, sat at the desk, squeezing his head with his hands.

"Still hurting, Papochka?" asked his daughter softly calling him by endearing name. "Hurting, hurting, damn it all! Everybody must know what is hurting, where is hurting, why is hurting... Yes, yes, yes, I am hurting, and so is my grandfather and great-grandfather!.. Leave me alone, for God's sake!" the old engineer exploded, responding not so much to his daughter as to the doctor and the members of the electoral commission who had tormented him with their questions and their sympathy.

Lenochka, surprised and offended, moved away from her father.

"Leave Papa alone, Lenochka, you see he is sick, he has nervous exhaustion, he needs rest..."

"I just wanted to know, Mommy, if maybe he is feeling better after the trip. Didn't the doctor say the fresh air is good for him?.."

"And rest, Lenochka, mostly he needs rest..."

And Sergey Ivanovich was thinking, with his eyes closed, "What a fool I've made out of myself! Thank God at least that the doctor has helped me out—nervous exhaustion! Ha! It could've been worse!"

Zinaida Leontievna could see the humor of this episode, but she was also plagued with anxiety, "Will all of this end well?"

The day was spoiled for the Gasevsky family, it passed in strained silence, they were all left to their own thoughts.

Next morning, Sergey Ivanovich entered his trust building with an unpleasant feeling of a guilty schoolboy. The moment he crossed the threshold of the lobby, the doorman, whose real duties were rather to control the attendance and to report on the conversations of employees meeting in the lobby, smiled sweetly and inquired about his health.

"Thank you, comrade Kuchumov, I am somewhat better today", the engineer answered, and thought, "Does the whole trust know? This rascal wouldn't be asking for no reason, he must've sniffed it out somehow..."

In his office, on his desk, there was a fresh issue of the town newspaper. He wanted to push it to the side at first, then he saw a picture that horrified him – on the first page, a large two-column photograph depicted him at the moment of depositing his ballot-paper in the ballot urn! He started reading; an inscription under the picture explained: "In the photo: the sick shock worker-engineer Gasevsky was brought to the eighth voting center in an automobile, thanks to the care of the Party and the government. All the members of the electoral commission have helped him fulfill his duty as a citizen of the USSR, by letting him through, out of turn, to the registration desk. Unhesitatingly, comrade Gasevsky is voting for the worthy candidate to the Supreme Soviet, and he has no doubt that, with a hundred percent attendance of the working people to the ballot urns, Maria Ivanovna Chuikova will be elected and that she, as a member of the Supreme Soviet, will show a keen interest and sensitive and caring consideration towards her constituents."

There followed a description of the "shock worker" Gasevsky's "affluent life," his "large and beautiful apartment," and the "exemplary family" of this toiler. The article ended with the engineer's gratitude to "beloved Stalin who had created the very best conditions for all working people, conditions in which they lovingly labor for the benefit of the socialist state."

"Oh, what a horror!" Sergey Ivanovich thought, "One more tribulation! The

snapshot in the newspaper. The foolish article, and, worst of all, the 'shock-worker!' What nonsense, who could've written such rubbish?!"

The typist entered, dryly saluted the engineer and immediately sat down to her work.

All day the engineer was pestered with telephone calls.

"Is this comrade Gasevsky? How is your health?"

"Sergey Ivanovich, is that you? You're at work already?"

"Well, well, is that serious?"

"So you're a shock worker now!"

"Are you in a different apartment now?"

"And then, you know, this affluent life..."

What irony, what malicious mockery there was in each inquiry, each congratulation, each expression of sympathy! The poor old engineer was ready to abandon his work and run away from all these intolerable conversations, especially as he was not even able to do any work. Numerous acquaintances, as if conspiring, were calling him one after another.

While Gasevsky, holding down his mounting indignation, was answering respectfully all those phone calls, the partorg Gusev together with the local union secretary were discussing the existing situation. An old engineer cannot be a strike worker! He ought to look out instead, so as not to be classified as a wrecker—and here, looked only, the strike worker! Finally, the partorg decided to find out in the newspaper's editorial board, who had written such an absurd heresy.

The annoyed editor called for Losev, who had been covering the eighth election center. "Look here, comrade Losev, how did you manage to make some Gasevsky into a strike worker, and generally pile on so much 'socialism?'"

"Ivan Vasilyevich, didn't you yourself endorse it for printing? As for Gasevsky, I heard about him from our industrial section chief, Yarovoy..."

The editor sent out for Yarovoy.

"What is this Gasevsky, is he a strike worker?"

"What Gasevsky?"

"That engineer, from the trust?"

"The one in today's issue?"

"That's right..."

"I don't know, comrade editor, this is the first time I heard about him."

"How's that, comrade Yarovoy, haven't you told me yourself," Losev interrupted.

"Wait, wait, Losev, you've mixed it up. I've been telling you about Gosnevsky, a worker from the Red Metallist plant – a staunch Party member, a strike worker. That was it, and I never said anything about any Gasevsky. Generally, I never tackle the intelligentsia."

"So, comrade Losev? Did you know Gasevsky is a wrecker?" the editor asked the abashed journalist, "So, without checking your facts properly, you palm off on me such silly columns and photos..."

"I got confused," said Losev, who was now frightened and making excuses.

"Look out, pal, it might get you in worse trouble than just losing your job, they could take your Party card for that! Just think of it, a Communist glorifying wreckers! This is simply unacceptable! If you get away with it this time, be grateful. I'll call the

trust right now and find out more about it..."

The employees left, and the editor dialed the partorg of the trust.

"So, comrade Gusev, we do have a mix-up here, my employee has confused Gosnevsky with Gasevsky. Is something serious happening because of it?"

"No, comrade editor, but Gasevsky has never been a strike worker, it's embarrassing..."

"Is he an alien element?"

"No, not really, just simply an old intelligentsia..."

"Eh-eh! Aren't you being over-cautious, comrade Gusev? Don't you know how many old engineers have received government awards? This, my friend, is an unhealthy deviation! I realize my editorial board has made a mistake. We can correct it in the next issue, but you are trying already to turn an honest engineer into a wrecker!"

"No, comrade editor, not over-caution," Gusev started justifying himself, knowing that the editor could drag this issue all the way to the town Party committee bureau and pin an unhealthy deviation on him, over-caution and other "diseases" which Party functionaries are prone to. "I just wanted to sort out this misunderstanding. And in general, for Gasevsky, I have long been addressing our trade union organization about him. Though he is not a Party member, and is an old engineer, still he is working as our design bureau chief, fulfills his job successfully, and it's time to promote him. It's just that the paper announced this too early... But we had already agreed to advance him to a strike worker status..."

"That's good, comrade Gusev, it looks though like your trade union organization needs some shaking up!"

"That's what we'll do today, designate Gasevsky as a strike worker..."

"So, it is all settled, comrade Gusev, and there is no mistake in the newspaper. I really don't understand why your people should make all that fuss when it's all due to their own irresponsibility."

"Our trade union organization is a bit weak, it needs some shaking up, and that's exactly what we'll do..."

After putting down the receiver, Gusev gave the instruction to type in engineer Gasevsky's name into the strike-worker list. The cowardly union secretary promised to do that, but actually didn't insert the name. The trust's director, who was not following closely the inside affairs of its trade union organization, saw the picture in the newspaper, read the article about his strike-worker engineer and dropped into his office to inquire about his health.

"How are you feeling, comrade Gasevsky? Would you like to take a vacation? We could arrange a sanatorium accommodation for you, in the Crimea or Caucasus, at the trust's expense."

"No, no, comrade director, I'll wait till summer with my vacation, then I'll go..."

"As you wish, but we could arrange all that right now..."

The director left. Phone calls continued to enrage Sergey Ivanovich. The typist continued her stubborn silence and avoided looking at the old engineer.

At last, the working day ended. Gasevsky was even glad of that, and, hastily, began preparing to leave for home. Suddenly the phone rang, sounding especially shrill in the empty office. The engineer stopped. "Maybe I needn't even take it? But what if this is a business call?" And the engineer took the receiver.

"Is this the strike worker, engineer Gasevsky?" asked the mocking voice on the telephone.

"Yes, this is me..."

"Scoundrel!" said some very familiar voice, and Sergey Ivanovich heard the sound of the receiver on the other end being lowered back onto the telephone set. Blood rushed to his head. He felt indignant, outraged, deeply offended, undeservedly affronted. He started calling the telephone exchange, "Hello... Hello... Central?.."

"Twenty four." said the nasal voice of the telephone girl.

"Where from were calling just now to the trust?"

"At the bakery factory..."

Gasevsky dropped the receiver. Calling there was useless. He knew perfectly well that he knew no one there.

With his head lowered, he trudged home slowly, sorting out in his head the names of all his acquaintances who could have mocked his "strike-workship" so cruelly.

That "scoundrel" lived inside him, giving him no respite. Grave insults sometimes become lifelong memories, and the main reason why they are so painful is that one cannot unburden oneself by telling somebody else about them.

So, Sergey Ivanovich continued going to work, creating his projects and composing explanatory notes for them, but the "scoundrel" wouldn't let up, tormented his soul, did not allow him to live in peace.

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Half a year later, one night Gasevsky was brought from his home to the NKVD and thrown into a dark and narrow cell that was already crowded. Having felt his way to a relatively empty spot, the old engineer sat down on the stone floor and, till morning, he kept thinking and asking himself, "What for?"

He considered all the misunderstandings he had had in his place of work, and did not find any that could have provided a pretext for accusing him of being a wrecker. He knew well enough that wrecking was the fashionable accusation whenever an engineer was arrested, therefore, he kept searching persistently for something that could have provided at least some indirect occasion for his unexpected imprisonment. But in vain did he go through all his designs, all that night till morning! He could recall nothing except the designs' approval and endorsement by the center.

The springtime dawn barely crept into the cell through the small, narrow window. The outlines of the sleeping inmates were becoming visible. Their faces could not yet be seen yet, but their trembling bodies, their occasional groans and incoherent shouts were warning Sergey Ivanovich of the forthcoming trials.

Suddenly, from the midst of the vaguely seen bodies, a man slowly arose and started cautiously to make his way between the sleepers. At first he was hard to recognize, but when he approached nearer, Gasevsky saw an unshaved face and glistening eyes. The man came up quite close and whispered, "Ahh, the scoundrel! The engineer-strike-worker Gasevsky got caught, too!" and went off into a soundless laugh.

Sergey Ivanovich recalled the bakery factory and the familiar voice.

"Petya! Peten'ka! What are you saying! My dear! Be merciful! Be merciful for God's sake! Never have I been a strike worker! How could you hurt me so?!.."

"And the paper with your photo? With the affluent life?.."

"Petya, Petya, stop, be silent, I'll explain everything to you, never have I been..."

"And the newspaper?"

"You sit down right here." Sergey Ivanovich squeezed himself deeper into the corner, making room for his former schoolmate. "I'll tell you all without concealment," and, forgetting all about being seated in an NKVD basement cell, he started a heated explanation of how it had all been caused precisely by his unwillingness to be a scoundrel. When the old engineer finished, his friend laughed soundlessly again.

"Well, then, Sergey, forgive me. The bakery factory was a fiction. You should know, I've always worked in the railroad agency... But don't you laugh out loud... One shouldn't do that here... They may determine it to be insanity and... execute you..."

"And why are you here?" Gasevsky asked softly.

"For the same reason as you are, Sergey. Either there was a denunciation, or just to fill a quota..."

"So you say one shouldn't laugh?"

"Also, there is nothing to laugh about... But some people do... The desperate ones... They want it all to end sooner..."

"Is it very terrible then, this thing?"

"What thing?" his friend asked, missing his meaning.

"NKVD?"

"Not that it's terrible, but not everybody can bear it..."

The waking inmates were beginning to fill the cell with a subdued noise. The day of suffering, of interrogations and tortures, was beginning. Gasevsky watched the faces ravaged by torment, and nervously awaited his own interrogation...

So Gasevsky disappeared from the trust. But he also dragged after himself no less than ten card-bearing Party members, "responsible comrades", who had "blunted their class vigilance." The town Party committee, the editorial board and the trust were all devastated. The brisk draftsman was seriously frightened, and started withdrawing from social activities. Finally, the arrest of the typist Vera forced his decision to get away from the job in the trust as fast as he could.

And Vera Alexandrovna was to answer just one question of the NKVD interrogator: "Who was the addressee of the illegal, counterrevolutionary letters of Gasevsky, typed by her?" But since she could not answer this question, she had to undergo much at the hands of the sadistic interrogator. The girl had fortitude. She did not sign a single interrogation protocol; and seven months later she was released.

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A few years went by, the two old friends met again, but in a very different environment – abroad, in a refugee camp; and remembering old times, they laughed loudly, without fear that they'd be acknowledged to be insane... and executed.

And in a different camp, the typist met the brisk draftsman, and one day he asked her to marry him. "No," said Vera Alexandrovna, "I want to breathe fresh air, and in your presence I always feel stifled as if I were back at the meeting in the trust."

The draftsman understood what the young woman was hinting at, and did not attempt to justify himself, because he knew that no words of his could delete from his past life the Soviet careerism, even though he himself had put an end to it after the

“Gasevsky case.”



## The Story of Comrade Suffermuch

Comrade Suffermuch traveled north. A long way, in fact the furthest possible distance. When he arrived at his destination with the other comrades just like himself, someone with a loud voice greeted them with these very significant words:

“Here, you counterrevolutionary snakes, here you will die!” and pointing energetic hands to opposite sides added: “There is nowhere for you to escape. No one hearing these things has ever been known to return home. This is the end of you; you are finished, done for. Do you understand, you counterrevolutionary snakes?”

Whether the “counterrevolutionary snakes” understood or not, no one can say, but all of them, including of course, Comrade Suffermuch, began to “build socialism” in the territory at the ends of the earth.

Well, so then, Comrade Suffermuch began to “build socialism,” while his wife got busy on his account. We can’t say why she wanted to have her husband building socialism nearer to her. Perhaps, she felt it was not pleasant to live as a wife without a husband and her small daughter to be without a father. Perhaps, she was guided by other motives, but at any rate she got busy. And although, in some offices she was told, “You are wasting your time, since your husband has already confessed everything,” nevertheless, she carried on with her efforts. She haunted the offices, wrote letters, traveled from place to place, but all to no avail. Mrs. Comrade Suffermuch unearthed all her relations, and then she remembered that her first cousin held the position of procurator in one of the republics.

She sighed deeply, “Ah, well!” she thought, “There is a black sheep in most families!” and went to pay her respects to the black sheep.

Comrade Blacksheep, of course, made excuses and was unwilling to commit himself, but his little cousin’s tears finally awoke a hidden human feeling within him, and he promised to see himself what could be done for her. Whether his activities lasted a long or a short time we do not know, but at last the hour of deliverance came for Comrade Suffermuch.

He finished “building socialism” at the edge of the world. His lawful wife sent him money to get home with, and he set out on his journey and was taken to the railway station. He bought a ticket to his destination out of that same money, of course, which his wife had sent him. He gave the booking office clerk two two-hundred ruble notes, received his change, put it in his pocket, and went walking up and down the platform while waiting for his train.

Then he came to the first class waiting room, where the passengers are supposed to wait, and saw that there was a stand with packs of cigarettes on a shelf, and, of course, a buffet attendant. He remembered that he had been a smoker, and he so longed to inhale tobacco smoke after going without it for three years, that he could not resist buying two packets of real cigarettes for the long journey. He sat at a small table near the buffet, opened one pack, took out a cigarette, smelled the tobacco, smiled happily, and lighted up. He sat there enjoying himself, puffed out clouds of smoke,

inhaled, he even felt a little giddy after going without it for so long.

Suddenly, from nowhere, a man in uniform appeared before him. Not in full dress uniform, but in an all too familiar and dreaded one.

"Follow me," said a melodious voice. Needless to say, Comrade Suffermuch followed the person in the ominous uniform. They went into a room. He wondered what could have happened. The person in uniform showed him several notes and asked him in a pleasant voice:

"Are these your notes, citizen?"

"I don't know," replied Comrade Suffermuch. "I bought ticket at the railway booking office, but I did not pay for it with those notes, mine were larger, but I did pay for the cigarettes out of the change from the ticket. It is possible, but I can't be sure about those notes because they aren't marked."

"Oh, so they're unmarked, citizen! Just take a look at your own handiwork."

Comrade Suffermuch, with trembling hands, put on his spectacles, looked at the soviet note, and froze with horror. It was a printed note, but on Lenin's snout there was an unprintable word written with an indelible pencil, that is to say, so it could not be rubbed off. The word, it is true, was written in capital letters. Comrade Suffermuch examined it, slanting it this way and that, but there was no getting away from it, the unprintable word was certainly there. He went cold with fear. He had recently escaped from that place, and now what? Was he to return there again?

And then, to make matters worse, the Comrade buffet attendant, who was also in the room, gave his explanation to the man in dreaded uniform.

"He bought the cigarettes, so he must have paid cash for them, for nothing is sold on credit here. We handed him the cigarettes and he handed us the money. At first we did not pay any attention. But then we noticed that word written over our beloved Ilyich (Lenin). Consequently, we reported it to you for your attention; and in any case, to have hidden the matter would have been an enemy action, as you well know."

The person in the foreboding uniform looked at the note, and then asked Comrade Suffermuch the vital question: "Do you confess, citizen, that the word on the illustrious, deceased Ilyich is in your handwriting?"

"Have mercy!" replied Comrade Suffermuch. "I am not guilty of passing notes with unprintable words written on Ilyich's face. I would not do such a thing, honored Comrade, firstly, because I want to live, and secondly, because I have only just this moment escaped from 'That place' and I certainly have no wish to return there, and I could not do such an evil thing. And thirdly, my wife and daughter, who is not yet grown up, have spent three tedious years without me, and I don't even know whether or not they still live in our Communist fog. I received that note at the railway booking office when the clerk gave me my change with the ticket."

The person in the portentous uniform, although he was very harsh, was nevertheless moved by Comrade Suffermuch's tears. Not very easily, it is true, Comrade Suffermuch pleaded with him for nearly two hours, but at last, he did with great difficulty persuaded him that he was innocent. But he got a stern warning on leaving, and an order to report when he got home to the colleague of the person in the prodigious uniform, and inform this party of what had occurred.

Comrade Suffermuch returned home and was met by his lawful spouse and daughter. Well, it so happened, that his hometown was in great confusion, due to the

German invasion of the Soviet Motherland, and as a result he never reported to anyone.

And now Comrade Suffermuch is somewhere in the United States. They say that no one in the free world writes unprintable words on paper money. Perhaps, such words do not exist in America, or perhaps, it is a sign of love for the state, or a sign of respect, one really doesn't know.

## “Lyamp”

Comrade Bukvoyedov – a Lettereater – received an invitation. How can one refuse when invited? This is impossible. Nor does Comrade Bukvoyedov’s upbringing lend itself to such, one may say, boorish treatment of an invitation. He knew, of course, that there was no need to expect any good from such a visit, because this establishment was such that the doors leading in open on their own, and then out, pardon me, maybe to someone this happiness was ascribed by birth or, perhaps, someone is ready to embrace the pangs of martyrdom. In a word, seldom do the doors ever open. Extremely seldom.

Comrade Bukvoyedov had only just one flow of note. He is not one of the fortunate ones. On the surface, it is true that there were no abnormalities to be seen. But if you were to dig into his biographical past or stir the dust of his twice removed aunt of grandfather’s cousin, then it would not correspond to the present time spirit, because this grandfather was captured in a photograph with a sword and Skobelevsky<sup>1</sup> moustache; while the little cousin of his trice removed aunt, generally speaking, appeared to be a cadet; and the trice-removed auntie herself appeared to be a lady in her enormous hat with quite a feather and, what’s more, wearing a necklace!

Well, and Comrade Bukvoyedov’s present is not completely without reproach because he works as a newspaper proof-reader. Just who can say, here abroad, that the proof-reader is a literate person? No one, of course, because every newspaper, proletarian or bourgeois, has its mistakes. And just why the mistakes are there? Because, as it is known, the entire generation of proof-readers is illiterate. And should the reader here find a thousand justifications for their semi-literacy or illiteracy based on the haste of newspaper work, these reasons are simply not valid over there, because a proletarian with a party card is a perfectly literate person and, the main thing, extremely demanding of quality work. And this demand has one peculiarity—this proletarian always and everywhere sees mistakes as a deliberate, hostile action of definitively decayed intelligentsia. And boy does there exist a category for such cases—saboteur!

The little town newspaper, well, gets published in various languages. Once in Russian. The second time in Ukrainian. The third time in a mix. That is, both in Russian and in Ukrainian. But the Ukrainian is also diverse. Today, let us say, in the western style, then tomorrow—per wise dictate from above—a la Shevchenkov’s.<sup>2</sup> Everybody knows that the Chief is a genius in the questions of linguistic even in the African language, and not only in some form of Russian or Ukrainian! So, go and dance polka-mazurka with orthography of “placard” or “plyacard”? In a word, the straightforward and firm general instructions go around just like Zhuchka dog’s little tail when she’s promised a little, tasty left-over dinner bone. As for what “what,” the Ukrainian enlightenment minister, comrade Skrypnik,<sup>3</sup> a virtuoso in languages, well, he didn’t catch up with these general instructions and opted to depart into obscurity.

Now the little thoughts comrade Bukvoyedov is having aren’t so very merry—both the past in a red murk looks ominous, and the present is completely covered in fog. But

he responds to the invitation. Because another option, to be sure, does not exist.

Of course, comrade Oleynikov is holding session in the establishment. A peaked cap with a red hatband. A little red star with the hammer and sickle. And even, it seems, his hands are red. Maybe the last thing only seemed that way to comrade Bukvoyedov, but he persistently maintains that he could not have been wrong about the color, because, says he, this is not Ukrainian orthography and, in general, it is not type of petit or corpus typeface.

Oleynikov, this comrade, presents the little newspaper, "You," he says, "have a grammar education on you?"

"Yes, I have."

"You haven't forgotten how to read, have you?"

"Seems I haven't..."

"Well, go ahead and read your harmful little production!"

"Lyamp," Comrade Bukvoyedov read dismally."

"What kind of "lyamp" exists at the current moment, if dear and wise Chief of ours ingeniously ordered to write exclusively 'lamp?' Could it be that you wish to follow after Skrypnik?"

"No, comrade Oleynikov, after you!" comrade Bukvoyedov declared perfectly boldly.

Comrade Oleynikov was outraged, pounding his fist against the table while yelling choice words, "Just what you telling me... you wish to join your great-grandfather? Or maybe to join our universal enemy Skrypnik?"

But our comrade Bukvoyedov is holding up like a hero, and he's not giving in. In a word, he's not afraid. Someone else in his place would be saying, "Yes I, yes we..." But he's mum. Stoically he bears the outraged mood, even hammer and sickle mean nothing to him!

It needs to be explained why. Comrade Bukvoyedov picked up a certain disease when he decided upon joining the proof-readers—he reads everything everywhere. Placards, signs, wall newspapers, various nameplates on institutions and establishments—always looking for mistakes. You could say, he's training. Well, the establishment that comrade Oleynikov was sitting in, took up the former merchants house. On the lower level, where once the little merchant's store existed, a so called Red Corner—recreation and reading room—was formed, and in the shop window the First of May slogan was written out in pure Ukrainian in white oil paint, "Long Live Sociyalism!"

So when comrade Oleynikov had his say and became tired, comrade Bukvoyedov invited him to admire this former merchant's shop window.

They went outside together. They observed. Then comrade Bukvoyedov asked, "So just how am I to exist now, if I myself do not know whether I live in 'socialism' or 'sociyalism?'"

Well, they separated. The comrade with the hammer and sickle had, as they say, nothing to cover with. Only at parting did comrade Oleynikov express some "kindness" in one of the language versions. Comrade Bukvoyedov understood it, of course, only he didn't allow it in print because of his proof-reader's habit. Nor was there available any corresponding typeface. Must have been some type of "sold out" sign.

## The Clever Editor

An editor was appointed to the editorial staff of N's newspaper – Ivan Vasilich Zaumenko. He arrived at his new workplace at the editorial office. He made the round of all rooms, the hall, visited the archive and the office of the typist-radio operator, went downstairs into the printing house, peeped into the publishing house office. All done silently. Not even one sound escaped his lips. He never even said "hello" to anyone. He returned to his office. Closed the doors. He is in sitting there as if having a meeting.

The workers of the editorial office, not that they were frightened, but they pondered. The broom is new—from its novelty it might start to sweep clean. But the senior secretary was one of those sharpie characters. Even his surname was sharpie—comrade Proydokhin—McSlicker. He breathed some fresh air through "fortochka"—small hinged ventilation pane in the window—and headed decisively towards the editor's office with a "Report" folder. He had to do so. Such was his responsibility.

He approached the door. Knocked and stood there waiting to hear some kind sound coming from the office. Silence. Comrade Proydokhin thought about it a little, and then opened the door, since the editor was possibly a little deaf, or speaks in a whisper. Or maybe he is no longer in the office. But he looks—editor is sitting. Well, there is nothing to do—the door was open, he came in.

"Comrade editor, I have pressing matters to report"...

The editor keeps silent...

The secretary placed the folder on the table. Zaumenko looked into it, shut the folder, and silently moved it aside. The secretary turned around and left the office.

All colleagues, of course, rushed toward him, "How's the editor? What is he? What he is like?"

"Deaf and dumb!.." solemnly replied comrade Proydokhin.

And this news immediately circled the whole huge publishing house. Even the guards in the control room knew within minutes that the editor was deaf and dumb.

The party organizer of publishing house began to worry. How can it be that such an important position was given to a comrade who is deaf and dumb. He called the City Party Committee. Without indignation, of course. But so, as if by the way.

"Why is it that this new editor of ours tends to hold his tongue?"

And the head of agitation propaganda unit tells him, "What's with you comrade Nachetchikov, this man, one may say, graduated from CommAcademy—Communist Academy—and you begin showing suspicions! He is familiarizing himself with the job!"

The Party organizer swallowed these unpleasant words and never said a thing to anyone. Yet he could not stop his observations. Because such was his duty before the party—to watch.

For three days and three nights, the new editor has been sitting in his office, signing newspapers to be sent to press, without uttering a word.

Comes the fourth day, the secretary comes again to the editor with a report. The

matter was urgent. There was a mistake in the newspaper. It was the proof reader's fault, of course. The secretary reported. The editor is silent. He keeps looking at his papers. Comrade Proydokhin asks him, "Allow me to write a reprimand to the proof reader?" The editor keeps silent. He only nodded in sign of agreement.

The secretary left the editor's office and within five minutes the entire editorial staff knew, that the editor is not deaf and dumb, but just dumb.

So, comrade Zaumenko was nodding for three days and three nights and the belief in his physical handicap not only was growing but was becoming stronger.

However, after the three nodding days, the editor suddenly spoke. The secretary, comrade Proydokhin, came to him with a report as usual. The minute he appeared in the doorway the editor bellowed in Shalyapin's voice,<sup>1</sup> "Meeting!.." and threw the folder with files aside.

Within ten minutes, the spacious editor's office was filled with all the editorial staff. This was the first time they were able to take a good look at their new boss and make sure that all their previous assumptions had no grounds.

The editor was of medium height, with broad shoulders, a big head—a sign of great intellect—and huge hands. He wore his hair "a la Lenin," his mustache "a la Stalin", and his glasses were similar to the pair worn by the head of one of the local branches of NKVD—People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs—with huge, thick lenses in a black, heavy massive plastic frame. He spoke in a straightforward fiery manner, often quoting various "scientific" volumes of socialism written by the illustrious Marxist minds of past and present, always expecting lively applause at the end his speech. But, he would also pause in the middle of particular points wishing to give his colleagues the pleasure of applauding his speech. Unfortunately, none of the party members guessed to sweeten the editor's ear with at least one clap of their Party palms.

As for the non-Party personnel, they, as usual, glanced timidly at the editorial vanguard and did not dare to voice some kind of "self-thought" as not to bend the general line.

The first speech of the editor to his subordinates made a big, even lasting impression on all editorial workers. It began, not kind of, but exactly like this, "Tram-tarr-ra-rram-tam-tam!" ("Blaa-bla-la-la-bla-bla!") the longest unprintable sentence, after which the editor started talking in more articulate speech and no one could stop him for two and a half hours.

The female Party member colleagues smiled kindly, the non-Party female colleagues blushed and directed their beautiful eyes at the floor; the male Party member colleagues frowned, in a sign of solidarity and seriousness of the situation, and the non-Party members leaned their noses towards the open window, yet everyone decided, "This one is clever!"

"Extremely!"

"No physical defects!"

"Remarkable person!"

Even the party organizer, comrade Nachetchikov, thought to himself, "Ye-ep, the editor had graduated from CommAcademy with flying colors!"

Since then it was common knowledge that Zaumenko was not only a smart man, but also a genius to a certain degree. In one word, he was an incredible catch for the city.

The fact that the editor was incredibly clever was best known to Andreyevna, the

delivery woman in charge of the archives.

“Ha,” she’d say, “the other editors, if they copied the editorial, they would do it from one newspaper—they’d take ‘Pravda’ or ‘Izvestia’ for the previous month or for the year and that would be enough for them. But ‘this one,’ demands all the newspapers for the past five years! That’s how clever he is!”

And the secretary would add, “If he begins writing the editorial on Monday, he’ll be done by Friday, no doubt...”

Clever editor he was. So he resolved to be easy on the staff—he did not dig into their biographical maze to check if they were of pure proletarian origin and were not hiding any of the “have beens” of the old Tsarist regime among their ancestors.



## The Public Prosecutor

An important personality has fallen sick. The personality is occupying a post of responsibility. He is dealing with vigilance. He is holding such position—to keep vigilant surveillance. So, until now personality was in good health, everything was good. Even, very good. He was vigilant. Suddenly, illness happened—fever and all the other stuff. And the personality had to lie in bed, of course. And at that moment, his vigilance ceased. Probably the fever was the culprit. And all of a sudden the personality started thinking! Probably he started thinking, because there was no place to conduct vigilance. The personality even got scared—never before in his life had he resorted to thinking, and suddenly—here you go! Thoughts started running through his mind one after another! You can't keep up with them! And the whole process began from vigilance!

“To think of, this Koptilkin has always a dissatisfied face! And why? So what, he had to spend the night standing in line for bread!” And the thoughts about this non-party neighbor jumped into the personality's head. “What does he need? To sleep in bed embraced with his woman, while the entire VKP(b)<sup>1</sup> would stand in line in order to bring him in the morning the bread on a decorated plate?” And at this exact moment a thought managed to cling to his vigilance, “Why is it that in the VKP(b) the ‘b’ is written with a small letter, and in parenthesis, too?”

At this thought the fright stopped the personality's vigilance. “No, no, no! What's wrong with me!.. You know, He<sup>2</sup> Himself wrote the history of VKP(b)!” The personality looked around, “Maybe someone was peeping? Eavesdropping? Maybe someone thought, what he was thinking?.. You know, about Him, one must think with a capital letter! And when talking, all the more!” And the very sick man began shaking with servility—“He! Himself!..” and he very, very softly pronounced His name with a capital letter, and smiled despite the fever. “No, it is better not to be sick... it would be easier... easier in one's mind... Live as one got accustomed to live. And the most important—it is not dangerous! Just be vigilant! Be vigilant—that's it! And nothing more is required from the personality! But thinking?..” and the personality did not even dared to finish the thought—from being afraid.

The wife entered. The spouse. She was registered in accordance to all the rules, in the Civil Registry Office. Her face was showing terrible distress, “What kind of system it is? Where were you all this time? Didn't you see what is going on under your very nose in your region? I called the doctor in the morning, and now it's evening already... To be certain, Terenty Ivanovich, the minute you get better, you need to take them in your hands immediately! You see, this is where you have to be the most vigilant. This is how all of your VKP(b) could be easily driven to the grave by the saboteurs!”

It was getting dark when the exhausted woman doctor, who after wading through the mud all day from one patient's house to another, appeared at last at the personality's home.

Well, the personality was, as they say, at his last gasp, near his end. He even stopped thinking. But he became extra vigilant. He is paying attention to how the doctor

is examining him, how she is auscultating, how tapping his body, whether she is asking substantial questions or only formal ones to fill out a form, what kind of medical care is she showing to the dying personality, a member of the Party—making good notes of everything to himself.

“Yea-yea-yea!” drawled the woman doctor, looking at the thermometer. “Your temperature jumped... Near forty...”<sup>3</sup>

“Can’t you tell me exactly how high?” the dying personality showed interest.

“Thirty nine point eight. Let me prescribe you some aspirin... Sweat it off and then everything will pass.”

“What kind of disease is it?” he asked in a dry strict voice like questioning saboteurs during the process.

“Well, the kind you catch in this weather? The grippe.” The personality heard it as ‘gribb’ (in Russian it sounds like the word ‘mushroom!’). “Half of the watch is sick! But they are coming to work. And you, if you have a chance to lie in bed, you’re a lucky man!”

The woman doctor left to visit another patient. And the personality remained suspicious. One needs to be vigilant. But with the temperature close to forty degrees one can’t go very far!

The wife waded through mud to the pharmacy. And the personality, either due to boredom or to suspicion, began thinking again. “The VKP(b) shows fatherly care for them! And they what? A doctor is called in the morning to the sick member of the party and they appear in the evening! And listens to you coldly. And then so calmly announces, ‘You have the ‘gribb.’ What kind of a mushroom? Where? Exactly, in what place? Why mushroom? We have to find out! Find out by all means!..” the prosecutor became excited. Then his thought jumped to the previous question, “Nevertheless, why the small letter ‘b’ and in parenthesis, too? Ah, yes, He Himself wrote the *History of the VKP(b)*,” mumbled the frightened personality, calming himself, “I’m glad no one’s here... even the wife...”

It is really scary, though. What if somebody heard? Saw? Read the mind of the personality? It was hard even to imagine, that something this terrible could happen! But it could! Maybe someone could, but the prosecutor would know better!

The female doctor came to visit the personality on the next day.

“So, you see, your temperature came down... You are getting better...”

“How high?” asked the personality in dry and sharp voice as if during questioning.

“Thirty eight point eight... You need to drink some more aspirin...”

“What do you mean? Who do you think I am, a live personality or non-Party organism? The party shows you its fatherly care, and you—do you care about the party??? Or maybe you are not a doctor at all, but are ‘the enemy of the people’?”<sup>4</sup> What is it? Didn’t you know until now, that one aspirin decreases the temperature only by one degree? Why didn’t you prescribe me to take three aspirins at once to restore normal temperature?!..”

The woman doctor wanted to explain, and calm down the patient, to tell him something, but the personality was already yelling into the phone, “Operator!.. Operator! Damn you all over there, are you sleeping there, or what? The personality, one can say, is dying here, and you... Connect me immediately with the clinic’s chief doctor! Immediately!” yelled the irritated personality and sat on his bed, putting his feet down onto the bearskin.

"Is that you, comrade Gordon? You, comrade Gordon?.. Listen, comrade Gordon! Comrade, Gordon! Aha, it's you? Listen, Lev Abramovich, what kind of workers do you have assembled there?" and the personality began to give an account of the essence of the matter, like in the inquiry protocol. "Why not prescribe three aspirin powders to the patients to take at once?!" finished the prosecutor personality. The chief doctor began the long explanation, which personality could not comprehend. But his vigilant prosecutor's mind cooled off the indignation and he slowly hung up the receiver, lay down and turned off the light...

The woman doctor and the loyal companion of the prosecutor silently left the room.

The personality had never before thought in his entire life, and here suddenly, due to either idleness or to illness, he began thinking, "Perhaps, everyone in the hospital is 'the enemy of the people'..." and the articles of the criminal code started flashing in front of his eyes—which one needs to be attached to them. "Saboteurs... And the chief doctor together with them! That same Gordon! Comrade!" he said quietly with disgust. "Although, he is a member of the VKP(b)... And yet... why there is the small letter 'b', and in parenthesis, too?" and startled by this seditious thought that has reappeared, he began calming himself down, "But it was He Himself who wrote the *History of the VKP(b)*!.. But... I have to find out, what kind of disease is this mushroom 'gribb'? And where it grows in the individual?.."

That night, the personality, the prosecutor of the Stalinsky region, the Stalinsky district had a restless sleep. He saw the criminal process in his dream. He was sitting in the prisoner's box, next to him was some kind of a citizen Mushroom, and as a witness was the Aspirin Powder, and in the prosecutor's seat was He, Himself with the capital letter. And He, Himself was interrogating very thoroughly only one witness—the citizen Aspirin Powder—very skillfully.

And after that He turned to the personality, "The defendant Vigilantov! What were the conditions that made you start thinking? Tell me everything honestly and in orderly manner, why all of the sudden you began thinking about the small letter 'b' and in parenthesis, too?"

The personality forgot to take the powdered aspirin at night, but he sweated still as well all night even without it!

## The Incident with Comrade Zhulikov's Bed

There are different kinds of beds. Let's say, for children or for adults, single, one-and-half or double, on springs or without, made of metal or wood, in short, as we mentioned above—different. And sometimes there are no beds at all. For example, some happy collective farmers do not have them.

"How is that?" a surprised foreigner will ask.

Yes, dear gentlemen, simply no beds—with what money can the happy collective farmer buy a bed? He would not go for that not really necessary thing to Moscow or Leningrad where for foreigner's attention those not-immediately essential things are presented in the decorated show-windows of GUMs—the General Universal Stores—where they are sold at the exuberant prices?

You see, for this happy collective farmer it is more important to buy a piece of a daily bread! And to sleep is possible for all the family on an oven-bench! The more, the merrier, as the Russian proverb says.

There happen also different incidents. Some are funny, some sad, instructive or dull, like All-Union Marshal comrade Budyenny's speeches. In a scientific world the incidents are defined by words of foreign origin—comic, tragic-comic, tragic, dramatic... What kind of incident happened with the bed we shall give to the reader to judge, because for many reasons, we have difficulty somehow to qualify it.

In our times, it is known even to the babies that in the most democratic country the materialistic ideology is the sole explanation of every possible incident, therefore we have complete right to take advantage of the above-stated terminology in the present story.

On extensive Soviet space existed two factors, two things—the first – bed, the second – comrade five-ruble Zhulikov—a surname derived from word "the swindler." From an interaction of these two things happened that memorable incident with the bed about which the reader will learn below.

Comrade Zhulikov served in GPU – State secret police. The bed served to comrade Zhulikov. Comrade Zhulikov held extremely responsible post, mainly at night. He traveled all over the subordinated to him region and carried out rather important assignment of the party and the government. To say it shortly, he worked on confiscation of gold from the population. This assignment was of enormous state importance and demanded from the GPU subordinates like comrade Zhulikov great skills to see under the ground and through the walls, to have dogs' acute olfactory sense, plus some oratorical abilities, and be able to use firearms.

It is necessary to say that comrade Zhulikov was in top position in the business of confiscation of jewels. Perhaps he was one of the most able agents of GPU, if not all over the Soviet Union, but at least all over his region. Well grounded in politics and as a very conscientious member of All Union Communist Party, he knew to a letter the doctrines of Marx-Engels-Lenin, and their follower, comrade Stalin.

He knew it so well, that he could, any minute of day or night, tell any illiterate

engineer or doctor, on what page of Lenin's works are written words of dear leader about gold. Not once he reminded the irresponsible citizens who were hiding imperial gold coins from government, that under socialism would they build golden toilets! At least, that how the leader of the world's proletariat talked about it himself—and these words comrade Zhulikov knew well.

He knew these Lenin words so well because in the houses where he lived there were no toilets either in the houses or in the courtyards and he had to run to the neighboring yard, which was incredibly inconvenient. This inconvenience caused passionate desire to have his own toilet. The toilet became his dream and when comrade Zhulikov began the responsible work on confiscating of gold, it was natural, that a practical idea appeared to carry out Lenin's behests to build socialism in practice, if not in the whole country, but at least to build socialism in one particular family.

Given all the secrecy of confiscating of valuables from the population, comrade Zhulikov had an opportunity to share his night extractions with the state, to which he gave, depending on circumstances, from twenty-five to fifty percent of the net profit. The rest of the collected loot he decided to preserve as building material for socialism in his family—for the construction of a golden toilet. In the means of loot preservation his wonderful bed took part.

What kind of bed was it? Very ordinary bed – mass consumption goods, though not absolutely ordinary, let's say, it was not a common bed. It was a metal bed with four legs, certainly with the metal net. Its headboard and footboard were made of metal tubes whose hollow interior reduced its weight. It was painted in gentle cream color and in some visible places it shone with nickel. Actually, it was artistically made and, it needs to be added, it was a double bed.

When comrade Zhulikov brought his first deposit of building material for his future toilet, he had a problem of how to hide it from his own beloved spouse, to whom he could not entrust the secret of special state importance. While he was thinking about it, his sight fell on the bed. He lowered himself on his knees in front of it and started to investigate its beautiful legs. The investigation yielded magnificent results. Apertures in the legs just corresponded to the size of imperial gold five-ruble coins!

On that day comrade Zhulikov began his feverish activity. Every time coming home after an intense night's work, he accurately stacked building material for his socialist toilet in his bed legs and tightly corked apertures with right size corks. He did not worry at all that someone would find out about his state secret, because only he and his double bed knew about it, because during this operation of hiding imperial gold coins nobody was in the apartment—his legally cohabiting wife was at that time on duty in the establishment and could not know what was going on at home.

Comrade Zhulikov had been collecting building materials for a long time, feeding his hope for successful constructing of socialism, at least in one family, and had it not been for the incident, this very socialism would have triumphed!

But anyway, the incident happened, and it happened not by comrade Zhulikov's fault. Comrade Zhulikov received an apartment—new one, a perfectly, new one. So new that even paint on the doors and windowsills had no time to dry and stuck here and there to the new owner's clothing when they unintentionally touched.

Of course, no one in the town was surprised that comrade Zhulikov received a absolutely new apartment, because everyone understood that new apartments were

given first only to the most responsible comrades who required appropriate good rest after strenuous work, who needed solitude for considering today's problems of socialism and who needed secluded place to spend time during traditional political festivities amidst his party fellowship and in cozy domestic atmosphere. Therefore, no one was surprised when on the main street of the town appeared a droshky cart with comrade Zhulikov's belongings.

The droshky cart was moving slowly with an air of importance and with the feeling of extreme responsibility for the transportation of comrade Zhulikov's belongings. It was moving without any hurry, shuddering with all goods and chattels when the wheels were jumping from one cobblestone to another on the cobblestone roadway, or when cart slowly waddles when it gets into a pothole. A driver is sitting on the droshky cart, behind the droshky cart followed comrade Zhulikov himself, the proud owner of the things being transported; on the alert with a vigilant eye he is watching his precious bed...

"So what!" thinks comrade Zhulikov, "In the new apartment there is a toilet... And, as a matter of fact, there is no need for my gold now... But why should I give it back to my chiefs?! Also, everything may happen in the future... Maybe they send me to another town where there were never any toilets!.. Then I will need my saved building material for the construction of socialism!"

Suddenly the back wheels of the droshky cart jumped into a deep pothole and with them also jumped all belongings of comrade Zhulikov with such force that the corks, with which apertures in the bed legs were corked, jumped out and the noble sound of precious metal resounded on the cobblestones. Solar beams cheerfully played on imperial golden five-ruble coins.

Incident happened. What kind?.. Of course, a crowd was formed. Homeless children hooted and quickly picked up building material. The adult members of the gathered street crowd expressed their interest toward comrade Zhulikov's gold reserve not less than the homeless children. They unambiguously hinted at dark affairs of the transported belongings. From all sides were heard the offensive voices and sneers, and was heard the real Russian swearing—verbose and juicy...

The droshky cart continued to move as before, slowly and with an air of importance, like nothing had happened with comrade Zhulikov's belongings... But one could not see the owner of the belongings who was following droshky cart before. He imperceptibly disappeared in a dark alley...

Finally, droshky cart turned into the gate of such establishment to which even homeless children were afraid to come close. The crowd instantly melted...

All the same, in an instant the incident became known to his chiefs and comrade Zhulikov was quickly transferred to another town. Whether there were toilets in that town or not—we do not know, as well as we don't know about comrade Zhulikov's new activity. Whether he built a socialistic toilet in the new town or used the old capitalist toilet that was built before the most perfect revolution—it remained a mystery for us.

As about the incident, to what category it belongs, we leave for the reader to judge.

## Skillfully

What a surprising creature, man! Whatever they will do to him, what kind of experiments they make on him, and he does not care! He always strives to do everything his own way and always beats all of his “well-wishers” from the small to grownups.

Just think over the sense of property. In fact, now it seems clear even to babies, that this most nasty bourgeois prejudice with which proletarian authority has struggled for many years, yet it remains alive, and the main thing is that it bothers the Russian man until he will not satisfies it.

Actually, why talk about the struggle of proletarian government with him. Outstanding men of socialism, whose deepest minds invented the most beautiful systems of classless societies, devoted enormous volumes to the problems of a devastation of men’s souls, whose best sayings became a creed of all their mad followers, who have remained lonely together with their party comrades, who hotly undertook to transform the theory into practice.

Even the most outstanding of them, who glorified himself as a leader of all the world,<sup>1</sup> could not overcome the most common, the most ordinary Russian man neither with his geniality of wisdom, nor with his wise geniality.<sup>2</sup> And the interesting thing is that the more common was the Russian man, the more powerless was the leader’s wisdom and geniality.

It would seem that this very common Russian man, in front of whose eyes the builder of socialism annihilated in the most brutal way first the bourgeoisie, counterrevolutionaries, and imperial officers, then well-to-do-farmers and their sympathizers, then “enemies of the people”, oh my God, how many other enemies of this socialism, which should have made mankind happy.

With his childishly naïve soul he should have been, only because of fear of death, tortures of exile, he, the common Russian man, should have resignedly accept those new forms of public tenor of life, which for years were hammered into his life. It resulted that the poorest poor man and the most common worker became also the enemies. It occurred that inertia and conservatism were stronger than death and concentration camps.

Having shot to death the bourgeois, having eliminated imperial officers, having twisted in the mutton horn the intelligentsia, the virtuous “father of people” struggled like fish on ice over the Russian man, not just simple one, but now more simplified. But all of his wisdom, all his geniality are becoming zero against the soul of the most common mortal.

So now, let them only try to erect the barriers to the men’s most common everyday aspirations!

It is difficult to tell what happened in the Kremlin chambers. Maybe they heard the cry of man squeezed in the space of cooperative housing; maybe, the red ruler dreamed a terrible dream; or maybe they spend so much of people’s money on the

world revolution that nothing was left for constructing socialism. All of this, as a matter of fact, was not of interest to the man on the street, but the Kremlin's mob burst out with a decision about individual housing construction, according to which, fanned by care, the loyal slaves were showed much favor with credits, grants and all kinds of help. In one word just build, and government with all of its soul to help you!

But the soul of that government was like a soap bubble. It formed up in front of slaves and burst. Those who were close to the warm places, such as to warehouses, to money, and to authority, erected mansions for themselves and, one can say, did not touch their own money. But what should a mere mortal do? He had neither authority, nor money, nor the warm place near the warehouse, but his wish as to have his own piece of land as a farmstead and the comfort of a small house are not less than of those devout heralds of socialism with party membership cards who, with incredible enthusiasm, jumped to implement the famous decision about individual construction. They were, as one would expect, the very first here again.

But, the ordinary slave Zolotarev Kuzma, he not so long from the nearest village, and now common factory watchman, began to think about construction, too. What to do? He was fed up with his small room in cooperative housing, his neighbors became so loathsome that he had not any more strength left to stand it. Noise, stench, creaking doors, broken windows, ceiling with spots from the seeping rainwater—all of this bore him to death.

"I will build a small house!" one day he said to his wife Christina.

"Are you crazy? We do not have money to buy food, cannot repair boots, and you are dreaming about house!" she replied.

"You, Christina, are just a woman! And woman, as it is known, is a fool. Who is building now a house on their money? There are no bourgeois here any more. And, if it is allowed for proletarian to build a house, you need to understand how to do it. You need to do everything skillfully."

And the slave Zolotarev Kuzma started to build skillfully. Since the following day he never came home with empty hands and pockets—nails, old door hinge, wire, sticks that were thrown on the road, box, piece of tin, fire-grate found on the garbage pile—he brought everything into his cooperative shed until he got a piece of land on which he should build his house.

The first thing he built from materials he found was a small shed where he put the remainder of the collected stuff; then he fenced his homestead with sticks and poles and wound it together with wire; then he began to dig. He dug a pit for a cellar, prepared ditches for the foundation of the house, and even had time before autumn to make pits for the trees. Meanwhile he collected building materials in his small shed.

The long warm autumn allowed him to do a lot on his domain. First of all, with his wife he cleaned up the land from the weeds and planted the fruit trees; secondly, he built the cellar on the real concrete, which he was bringing stealthily in his pockets from the factory.

When the cellar was ready, Kuzma looked at the fruits of his labor and said to his wife, "What you think Khristina, 'the Father'<sup>3</sup> is cunning, but the muzhik is cunning even more. You see what kind of construction we have built!"

"Without your woman, Kuzma would not have done it! You are carrying from your factory, and I am carrying from all over the town!"



Zolotarev knew that his wife collected bricks by her own hands from everywhere. In some place she would find half a brick, in the other – a quarter—and all of them she brings “home.”

“And you said that we have no money to repair boots! You see what kind of time is now, sometimes there is no money for food but there is always something for the house, because now is the socialism!”

And Christina was assured that the time now is really different.

By coming of the winter, Zolotarev was suddenly transferred to the factory transport department. He started to go to the station for the cargo for the constructing of new factory shop. There were bricks and boards, nails and tiles, glass, in a word, everything he needed for his small house. And the way, just by chance, passed right by his homestead. How not to be tempted? Everything, so to say, is asking to fall in his hands, and you would perhaps refuse it, eh? In fact, the driver is not so silly as to bring everything to the factory. In fact, he was not the only one, everyone was doing it. And for him it is absolutely easy—he stops for one minute by his homestead, dumps five or ten bricks or an armful of tiles into the snow and goes further.

So in his small shed during the winter there were collected boards, logs, window frames, glass, and behind his not-so-much-to-look-at shed—stacks of bricks and tiles.

“Everything needs to be done skillfully,” he was telling to his wife every morning when he was getting ready to go to work.

Every Sunday he ordered her, “You, Christina, buy some honey at the market...”

“Ten eggs,” she was adding.

“Fresh country butter...”

And on Monday he would visit the manager of construction materials warehouse with the gift. “Stepan Ivanovich, here is a fresh food from the collective farm they brought for me.”

“Thank you. How much, Zolotarev, do you want for it?” the manager would ask, knowing that workers would never take money from him.

“Nothing, Stepan Ivanovich, it costs me nothing, and it is for your kindness...”

“What, what you mean, Zolotarev, now is not the old times for gifts to the chiefs...”

“No, no, Stepan Ivanovich, you know, we are so accustomed—when the person treats us with all of his soul, we are the same to him.”

In the early spring, Zolotarev and his wife did not sit in their small cooperative room. Christina was digging beds for planting vegetable garden and Kuzma was preparing building materials.

Once Kuzma came to his chief, brought “the collective farm gift” and asked by the way, “I would need, Stepan Ivanovich, a little bit of lime... I am building a small house...”

“Why not? You will bring to the Party organizer—he is also building—take a couple of vehicles for you,” answered the buttered-up chief.

And Zolotarev was glad to try to do his best—he brought more lime to himself than to the Party organizer.

When everything was ready to build, Kuzma took a vacation and started to work.

Hardly the day was breaking, and he with Christina was at his manor. In two vacation weeks not only the foundation was laid but also the walls started to show

above the ground. Both worked as four people would.

"No," thought Kuzma, "one cannot lose the time, the weather itself says that one needs to build."

He went to the clinic. Under his armpit was "a collective farm gift." He spent half day sitting waiting his turn for the doctor, but not in vain. He left the doctor's office with some kind of undefined illness, prescriptions and the bulletin for three weeks off "sick time." He smoked out the prescriptions paper, and brought the bulletin to the factory office.

So while being "sick" slave Zolotarev was building his small house until autumn. When the kitchen was ready, when the chimney began to smoke from the kindled fire in the stove, he said to his wife, "Well, Christina, we will live in the kitchen this winter..."

In a few days Zolotarevs left their cooperative room. During the winter Kuzma worked in his spare time on his not completed house and by the spring expanded his house to three more rooms.

On the first day of Easter he arranged a house warming and invited his boss, Stepan Ivanovich.

Drunken Stepan Ivanovich was telling Kuzma, "You see Zolotarev... the time is... difficult now... it is not like it was under the old regime... when you could go to the wood warehouse... could choose any board... Pay your money and it was yours... But now, you know it yourself... There are no more wood warehouses... or at empty hardware shop, you can buy nothing... Even if you have millions, you could not build even a small house!.."

"I understand, Stepan Ivanovich. And we don't need millions... We need only one good man like you, for example..."

"What, what you are saying, Zolotarev!.."

"I am telling you with all fairness, Stepan Ivanovich, if it was not for you, with all your kindness, I could never built my small house!.. You understand yourself, it is impossible to buy anywhere not only a common board but one cannot find even a single nail at the shop!"

Just so, the slave Zolotarev with his wife Christina, have built a small house at the expense of the collective farm gifts, skillfully, without buying even one single nail... But how otherwise it could have been done?

## Cunning Dodger

They used to say in well-known circles: "Could you imagine! Kat'ka got married to a communist."

"Do you know, Katyusha got married to a Party member! Yes and not any kind! A Secretary!!!"

Oh, how many exclamations were in the beginning after Kat'ka didn't get married, but reg-is-tered a marriage in ZAGS – the Civil Registrar's Office – with the Party member comrade Kozarenkov!

And it seems not without a reason, was accentuated in others, also well-known circles: "Reg-is-tered! What kind of a marriage it is?!" and was added rather rudely, "And what did you expect from this wench – Kat'ka, a partisan's daughter?!"

But the subject of all this gossipy news, which astounded our little town, was behaving as if it was none of her business all this chatter-chatter – before marriage her future husband has given her a guarantee – total freedom, since relationships between people in communist society, and relationships between a husband and wife in particular, should be completely free from any kind of prejudices and remnants of time past.

The second guarantee appeared on the eve of a "wedding," when Kat'ka wanted to present food stamps to her future husband.

"What is it?" Kozarenkov showed surprise as if he didn't understand what these colored slips of paper with printed small squares meant. "Food stamps? Forget about them, darling, you are entering the society of the future – neither the money, nor the food stamps, nothing of this is necessary. That is, you will have them, but this is, so to say, for 'the others' to pretend, for the sake of appearances, and as a matter of fact these monetary symbols are a hypothetical measure ...eh – eh – eh... of our prosperity at this stage of communism construction... and for us practically boundless... You see, instead of these food stamps here is for you the admission pass to ZER.<sup>1</sup>

"To ZER? What is it? Some kind of animal? One can be frightened..."

"You, darling, shouldn't be frightened with anything now," the bridegroom laughed, hugging his Dulcinea, "if it would even be GPU, even that wouldn't be frightful! And as for ZER, it is an out-of-bounds distributor, where the goods are better and cheaper, both ours and foreign. And don't forget they are in such quantities that will be completely enough for you! But only remember, nobody from your relatives or friends should use all these benefits and know about it! This is my privilege that I have the right to share only with my lawful wife.

"It is understood," Kat'ka agreed, prepared to this condition in advance by the life itself and by her girlfriend, who got married to the same kind of Party specimen.

The nuptial feast was passing as if in the shadow from the community, but not for the sake of modesty of the newlyweds, but because the additional non-party eyes would not see the wedding meal.

On Kat'ka's side, only Mother, sister and by special solicitation her childhood

friend, Mitya Draz, were present. Neither a soul of Kozarenkov's relatives were there, but two of his faithful friends and his technical secretary – a dried Caspian roach, Kapitolina Stupka.

They had a drink, snacked, somehow awkwardly laughed, sat like idols till ten o'clock at night and started to break up. First, groom's friends left the apartment with trivial well-worn wishes, then the sister with Mammy receded modestly, hiding their tears, and Kat'ka's playmate was forced into accompanying home the dried Caspian roach, Kapitolina Stupka. In general, everything passed calm and quiet.

Remained alone, Kozarenkov started to show his husband's legitimate rights.

"What?" Kat'ka filled with indignation, "To sleep with you? How dare you, comrade Kozarenkov? Are you out of your mind?"

"You are my wife now!"

"Didn't you tell me about freedom of relationships in a communist society? So, remember now, I will sleep alone!"

"Wha-at?" the secretary was surprised with the unusual courage of his young wife.

"Very simply, you can sleep on your bed, and I can nestle here on a couch..."

"Wait, darling, I don't understand something..."

"There is nothing to understand – freedom of relationships or no freedom?"

"Yes, but..."

"So, it means that it should be real freedom! As I can see, before the wedding you were busy only with propaganda..."

"Then why we got registered?"

"You wanted that, didn't you? And what could I do? I have found in you such kind of a husband who would give me complete freedom just as I need! As I am, the same as you are – against those rigid patriarchal rules of family life, about which you were fooling me when you were courting me."

"I don't understand... I got married... to... well, so to say ... have family, to have children..."

"Children? Ha! You have said that you don't like children, didn't you? Ha? Recollect it all properly, comrade Kozarenkov!"

"But you got married, understanding..."

"What? You don't like it this way? Take a divorce tomorrow!" shouted the young wife to stop this vapid conversation. "I am very tired and drunk, and I want to sleep!"

Accustomed to give orders, to be always and everywhere the leader, here Kozarenkov was taken aback – what he should do? He wanted to overcome with force these difficulties that he encountered for the first time in his leader's life, which he couldn't now overcome by an order or ranting, but all of a sudden he was frightened with the consequences – she would throw hysterics, would complain to her mother tomorrow and sister, and it will fly over the whole town, and then, look, it will reach the district!

"Well, all right, go to sleep on the bed, and I will sleep over here on the couch, and tomorrow we will talk," restraining himself, replied her the young husband.

Triumphantly Kat'ka headed for the room where there was already prepared a double bed, and locking up the door with the key, she said, "Good night, comrade Kozarenkov!"

Furious, he didn't reply to her. Knocking with his fist on the table, resulting with

the clattering of the uncleared dishes and bottles, he poured out a glass of “special” (vodka) and drank it off in one draught to the bottom. It took his breath away this “ZER’s special!” Following this with sprats, he didn’t think anymore about anything, since this “special”, added to the previous proofs, finished him to such a condition that everything became indifferent to him, and that tragic incident that has just happened, turned into comic.

“D-d-devil! Flopped!... Ha-ha-ha!” he burst out with a wild laugh. “Wedding night alone on the couch! Ha-ha-ha!... Just to tell anybody – they will ridicule you, they won’t believe it! As a matter of fact... What is this? A maiden, so to say... Kind of, as they say, inexperienced... Just from under the mammy’s wings. Kind of, how can one say.. Innocent...” reflected the secretary being tipsy. “Hm! Innocent! Oh-oh-oh! No-o-pe, my friend Matvey Kozarenkov! You are a practical person, and now you had fallen into your own trap! This ‘innocent’, apparently, passed the Crimea, Rome, and the food pipes! And right here is her ‘childhood friend’ ready at hand! Now everything is clear to me! We know these ‘childhood friends’! There Sheludeyev’s wife went with the same kind of ‘childhood friend’ to the health resort, and he pours tears and complains to everybody when he had one too many that he isn’t the father of ‘his own children’! I am a fo-o-ol! Am I an idiot? A ‘childhood friend’ under my nose! I will kill! I will kill! Both him and her!” he was clinching fists, gritting teeth, but was afraid of emitting the slightest sound of deep sigh.

The electric lamp burnt out untimely. The room with the scents of alcohol, ham, sprats, and other “extremely secret” eatables submerged into an impenetrable darkness. Kozarenkov reached gropingly the couch, cautiously came down on it, sat for several minutes without any thoughts, then lay down, feeling the coolness of the oil-cloth of the couch; thoughts interrupted by the unexpectedly extinguished light started to come out disorderly in the heated by alcohol head.

“Here’s a bride of proletarian origin! And now, then, – a wife!... Yes, damn it! Any woman would have married me!” And having remembered, modestly speaking, that he is over forty with visible gray hair and bald spot, with wrinkles and bagginess below the eyes, he has snubbed himself, “Not so quick, of course, the certificate of birth is letting down throwing over the bridge, so to say, ...Of course, it came out so silly. I hurried up. It was possible to try in the collective of the chemical technical school, there are around two dozens of brides – teachers... In the polyclinic or the hospital – women doctors, nurses... And I was driven by the devil after the cafeteria waitress from Narpit! Oh yeah, partisan’s daughter! Social status – complete purity! And now, what should be done with this purity? One cannot even speak now about a divorce! And it is already clear what kind of life together there can be. It would have been better to choose some kind of a nurse, worker from any mill, mine-worker! And now you have here a ‘wife’! And was she needed? Wanted to have comfort – a woman close in bed, moreover fleshy one! So then, you have selected one with the body and of proletariat origin, that’s to prevent to happen, as to some people had happen. Now both, the body and proletariat origin is there, in the bedroom, on our conjugal bed, so close, but the arms are short to grasp! D-damn! The wench is twice younger than me, and managed to dodge me so! Ha!..”

And the thoughts couldn’t be calm any more, because for the first time in his party life he felt to be a fool, as he felt at that moment! But the anger was growing to the white heat, because he has never experienced any love to his young ‘wife,’ therefore, his

madness was somewhat self-controlled, though it was reaching a desire to kill the culprit of his misfortune. Though this desire, in spite of the degrees, was cooling from time to time with clearing thought 'it is easy to kill, and then what's next?..' Opened eyes, directed into the black like soot dining room, started to ache from the strain. He couldn't close his eyes, he was trying to catch in the seemingly impenetrable emptiness the contours of anything – a chair, a table, the electric lamp hanging lifelessly above the table.

"Wedlock! Prejudice! Institution of proprietors and proprietresses! In the transition period from capitalism to communism – a comfort – to have a woman day and night close by!"

Then hatred came in real earnest, and Kozarenkov gropingly reached the bedroom door, pulled out revolver, shot into the keyhole and the door burst open. He entered, whispering in madness, "S-s-slut!... and shot into that place where the conjugal bed stood.

The sound of the shot flew through the window and echoed somewhere very far, but nobody in a neighboring socialist five-storied 'trunk' built next to a private residence, in which Kozarenkov settled down on the wedding eve, heard anything. And even if someone heard it, who would have had a desire to interfere in the life of a precious party comrade?!

The impenetrable night was all of a sudden lit with the moon. Deep silence came into its right. Kozarenkov, having used up all energy and with no more strength left, fell limply on the carpet next to the conjugal bed and lost consciousness...

Unceremonious dawn was glancing into the windows...

The persevering knock into the entrance door forced the "young husband" to startle. With the quickness of lightning a thought glimpsed about the first "married" night with two shots. He jumped on the second loud knock. Through the open window the bright sun was throwing its beams on the empty, not touched "conjugal bed," and Kozarenkov took a long breath with relief.

He slowly came to the front door, into which someone continued to bang with the fists. He opened the door. His "legitimate wife" stood on the doorstep. He silently made way for her.

"Well, comrade Kozarenkov, how it will be with alimony now? Through the court, or well then, voluntary?"

"How much do you need?" he asked with a surprising calmness, feeling emptiness inside.

"Several hundreds will be enough for now..."

"Several hundreds? How dare you?"... anger raised in his chest.

"Very easy and simply – for me and for our child!" she laughed with the eyes.

"How can it be 'ours'?"

"And who am I to you? A good acquaintance or a wife? Mistresses are paid for it, and you are my legitimate husband and don't want to pay?"

"I have never touched you even with one finger!" Kozarenkov rebelled against it in earnest.

"And why am I pregnant? From your Civil Registry Office's kiss?" she continued to laugh with her merry eyes, knowing for sure that her "husband" doesn't have any way out, because in a half an hour the whole town will know about this most silly story and

would believe, of course, not to a “husband”, but to her, the most legitimate suffering “wife”!

Comrade Kozarenkov understood this even better – his thoughts were rushing farther than the town, to the district, to the center...

“Devil!”... the husband counted *chervontsy*,<sup>2</sup> “Here, s-s-slut, get fat with your ‘childhood friend’!”

“Moreover, the admission pass to ZER should be with me... And here is what, I will occupy a room next to the kitchen... So you would not disturb me to live freely. And of course, I won’t disturb you,” and Kat’ka – the cunning dodger, having gathered and counted *chervontsy*,<sup>2</sup> went to arrange “her” room.

## The Stakhanovite Movement

There was this manager at the printing house. Comrade Supchikov. A member of the party, of course. He was a very pensive man. Any time he became pensive, that meant something extraordinary would have to happen.

Once, for example, he was pondering on Stakhanovite movement.<sup>1</sup> They say, that everywhere there is movement. At the factories and plants, at the state farms and collective farms there is movement, but in the printing house, nobody is moving. Well, in general, some things are moving—let us say, the machines or the working class. Yet, none of this is right. There is no enthusiasm, you know. There is no Stakhanovite movement. Everything is as in the old times. Well it is, in a way, understandable. The working class is old, the machines are old. On the other hand, not everything is new in the plants and the factories, on the state farms and collective farms...

Comrade Supchikov was thinking and thinking, dreamed and dreamed why there is no Stakhanovite movement in the printing house, and he came to the conclusion that working class enters into socialist emulation agreements, which are nothing but a formality, made only to throw dust in the eyes of the dear party and the dear government.

Therefore, there is a need to take prompt action—extraordinary ones. He began thinking about actions. How do you make a person to move in a Stakhanovite way, if in his passport it says that he is Gruzdyev and not Stakhanov. But the machine, for example, that's a different matter. Anything can be done to a machine. Metal will endure anything. Therefore, one can force the machine.

He began to think about the machine. It is known from the history of great people that any scholarly pondering results in "Eureka!" This exact fate did not escape from comrade Supchikov. An idea has struck him. Idea of a genius. Almost. Because the truly genius ideas appear only in the mind of the "dear leader."<sup>2</sup>

He jumped out of his office and directed himself with Stakhanovite enthusiasm movement towards the press department.

He glanced over the machines with his administrative gaze and his eyes stopped on machine No. 1, where as a printer was comrade Korovin, the oldest and the most backward element, even though he was the best master in the entire printing house. The manager decided to put some socialist lard under the hungry hide and spice up the life of this uncultured printer with some socialist pepper.

"Stop the machine, comrade Korovin!"

"What about fulfilling the quota?" asked the worker timidly. And the quota is urgent—"Proletarians of all countries'..."

"Never mind, comrade Korovin, you will catch up everything within an hour. You'll fulfill four quotas. You'll become a Stakhanovite. You'll make our 'dear teacher'<sup>3</sup> a gift, so to speak. You'll make famous our printing house."

Well, you've got to do what manager says. The printer stopped the machine. He is looking, observing and laughing under his mustache. And the manager squatted next to



the engine and began wrapping insulating tape around the shaft. He wrapped a layer about one centimeter thick and pondered, "Not enough or too much?" After some pondering and musing, he decided to add some more Stakhanovism to the job. He is wrapping the insulating tape around the shaft and the printer is chuckling to himself. He wrapped a layer about two and half centimeters thick, smiled coyly and said, "Turn on the machine, comrade Korovin!"

"No," says the old printer, "even though the life is better now, even though the life is happier,<sup>4</sup> I don't want to die comrade manager!"

"You are a backward element, comrade Korovin. But I will show you myself what the Stakhanovite movement is all about."

The comrade Supchikov got himself at the printing machine and comrade Korovin shrank into a corner behind the machine. The manager turned on the lever. The wheel jumped. The entire machine shuddered. Even comrade Supchikov himself began to wobble. The wheel caught the Stakhanovite spirit and began spinning round and round until the spokes could not be seen anymore. The machine is cracking, groaning, shuddering, trying to break loose from its base, and the manager himself is dancing on the step plate musing about, "Ten thousand reprints per hour... no, twenty thousand... thirty... a hundred... One printer in one workday can make the entire printing quota for a week... for a month...no, for a year... A telegram to the 'dear leader'... The Order of Lenin... the 'genius' leader himself will put the order on the chest of comrade Supchikov, who did overcome, so to speak, the printers' inertia. All over the newspapers his pictures and biography..."

Suddenly, in the middle of these rosy dreams, "Drrrrrrrr... Grrrapp!" the teeth cogs of the drive gear flew with machinegun bursts into the pressroom and the printing machine stopped. Only the flywheel kept spinning it even faster. And had the director himself did not turned off the engine, the flywheel probably would have ended up somewhere by the opposite wall of the pressroom.

With Stakhanovite-like alacrity comrade Supchikov headed towards his office, locked the door and started thinking. Again.

## A Mining Engineer

It is impossible for an ordinary mortal, like teacher, doctor or employee, to have an apartment all for himself in the mining hamlet. Everyone without exception occupies a single room in the common apartment, no matter how large his or her family may be. Only the high ranking officials of the mine and the Party leaders are having the privilege to have an apartment and sometimes even a private residence for their own use. But we, who are considered to be somewhere in between the “workers” and the “people’s enemy,” had to make use of what they deign to give us. For this reason I had a small room in a common apartment with all “conveniences” resulting from it. Fortunately, my family was not particularly large and I could reconcile with all the inconveniences.

My neighbor-lodger, an ophthalmologist, who shared the apartment with me, was getting ready to move to Kharkov and I wondered who would be my next neighbor. Even before she sent her belongings to Kharkov, the apartments foreman brought a new lodger to her room without even asking her permission.

A tall broad-shouldered man with a sallow complexion took his old suitcase and left it in the room he was going to live in and left.

In few days, after my neighbor left the room for good, the new lodger came with the same apartments foreman who also brought the furniture belonging to the mine. In half an hour I had a pleasure to meet my new neighbour.

Comrade Zelsky, Party member since 1905, had recently graduated from Dnepropetrovsk Mining Institute. He was, of course, from a working class. He was somewhere in his forties plus. During the revolution he took part almost on all fronts of the civil war, was decorated with medals – in short, he was a typical Soviet man.

We began to live with him but nothing good happen ever after.

Zelsky was appointed as a shift engineer. He came from work hardly washed from the coal dust, in dirty uniform, he had a muffled cough and spat blood on the floor. In his spare time he invited the coalminers with the accordion, and then from his room were heard wild or dashing sounds of music, dirty talk, filthy coal miners swearing and rattle of the bottles. He never cleaned up the room, nor did he ever open the windows. However tightly I closed my door, the stench of his lair penetrated in my room. There was no one I could complain to, besides it was dangerous. On the other hand it was impossible to keep living in those conditions.

Fortunately, engineer Zelsky did not demonstrate any elementary knowledge in his field and started moving down in his career ladder. First he was offered a position of a shift technician, then – mining foreman, and finally, when he failed even there, he was degraded to an ordinary miner.

The “mining engineer” felt offended and left the mine. My new neighbour-lodger had at his own expense to clean the dirt and whitewash the room left by the diplomate mining engineer, Party member and civil war hero; and for long time to get rid of the stench left by the Soviet specialist of the nineteen hundred thirties period, when the Party tried to intensely “proletarianise”<sup>1</sup> the specialists in all fields of national economy.



## Hypotenuse

Komsomol member comrade Golikov was invited to read a lecture. A lecture about Mars. Who else would they invite if not the geography teacher! He is the only one who knows about our satellites and all the planets of the solar system!

Well the subject is interesting, no doubt. Many people gathered. Some wanted to know more about the unknown celestial creation, others were interested to find out about life on Mars and yet others, having no doubt that the planet was populated, wanted to hear about the methods of communicating with it, in order to escape the overly happy and rich life on our sinful earth.

Well of course, there were those who, besides their surety in the fact that one of the closest neighbors of the planet Earth is populated, wanted to outdo the wisest leader himself and make an all-planet revolution, since they memorized from the Short Course of History of All Union Communist Party of (bolsheviks), that only in the USSR is a completely correct social order, allowing them a rich and happy life due to their party membership and responsibility positions through members only outlets for food and goods. In one word, the auditorium of the town theater was crowded. And the lecturer while waiting for the lecture to begin was a little scared as he was peeping through the hole in a curtain.

Finally, the curtain was open. Comrade Golikov did everything possible to remain calm, he entered the stage bravely towards the table that was covered as customary on these occasions with red rag, and began his lecture. About Mars of course.

We need to mention that after the first attack of nervousness, the comrade lector became calm and the lecture went very well in general. To tell the truth, comrade Golikov was sorry that such lectures usually do not finish with the storm of ovations, yet he was satisfied that everything went so smoothly.

As customary, after the lecture the questions and answers portion began. And everything would have gone smoothly if it had not been for the one comrade (some store manager, apparently) who insisted on receiving some kind of a definitive answer to his stupid question, to which comrade Golikov already had given what seemed a completely comprehensive answer to other inquisitive comrades, and was completely clear about it in his lecture.

"Well comrade lecturer, tell us, is there life on Mars? And whether people exist there in general?"

The lecturer gives his answer in complete accordance with the problematic form accepted in Soviet science, "Of course, Mars is in such condition, that one might think that the life is possible there," answers he.

"I recently have read a book by one professor—I do not recall his last name. Well, this professor writes, that on this planet there is life and it seems there are even people, who are called Martians," keeps insisting the same store manager.

Comrade Golikov answers again in a hypothetical form. To this, the listener (probably the same store manager) asks a question again, "So you tell us, for sure, so

we would not have any doubts, are there people on Mars or not?"

"Comrades," addressed the young geographer to the audience anxiously awaiting an answer, "I have answered this question several times already and I bring this to your attention again. I am speaking in words of Soviet scientists checked by the party and the government. Is there life on Mars? Our scientist say, "Yes, there is a hypotenuse about the existence of life on Mars!.."

"Ah-a-a-ah! A hypotenuse exists!" exclaimed with satisfaction this very shop manager and calmed down.

Fortunately, there were no more questions and listeners calmly went home.

## Martha Ignatyevna

In my wandering through the eastern Ukraine trying to hide from the GPU,<sup>1</sup> I lived for a short period in one very small town. There I met an old woman by the name of Martha Ignatyevna. She was a good old soul, only her tongue wagged too freely. Not that she spoke evil of anybody or repeated gossip. No, her trouble was that she was a counterrevolutionary. For example during the civil war her husband had run away to Poland, not to get away from her, heaven forbid, but because he did not like the Soviet authorities.

And Martha Ignatyevna had no hesitation in explaining the whole thing, "He did not get on well with Comrade Lenin." And when Stalin took Lenin's place, she wrote in a short letter to her husband in Poland: "Stay where you are and keep quiet, because Satan himself has taken over this government."

Whether her lawful husband had received her letter and stayed quiet in Poland, nobody knows, but Martha Ignatyevna talked about that also with her friends and neighbors. "Do you know, my old man actually thought of coming back home! As if there had been any change for the better! So I wrote to him: 'You are a fool and a simpleton! If our burden used to feel like a hundred pounds on our shoulders, it is now like a hundred tons.'"

Her friends listened to Martha Ignatyevna and, of course, secretly sympathized with her, but they kept a careful eye out to see that no agent of GPU was listening to her counterrevolutionary talk. There were two sayings in old Russia: "My tongue is my enemy" and the other one "One's tongue will lead to Kiev." Under the Soviets one's tongue became an even greater enemy and liable to lead one not to Kiev, but to the headquarters of the secret police, the GPU. And Martha Ignatyevna's tongue almost succeeded in leading her that way.

For the GPU got to hear that Martha Ignatyevna was in the habit of speaking her mind freely, too freely about Stalin and the Soviet government as well. So they decided to arrest the quick-tongued old woman. Now, everyone knows that such arrests took place at night when there were no spectators and witnesses—it must be understood that these were secret matters. So that's how it happened on the first occasion when the agents were ordered to arrest her.

Martha Ignatyevna was sleeping the sleep of the just when a car approached the barrack-like house in which she had a room. The car drove up to the walk path to the house and disgorged two stepsons of the Devil, who jumped out to stride up to the house in their usual manner and knocked on her door. Martha Ignatyevna half-heard the knock in her sleep and thought to herself, "Perhaps, my husband has returned home from Poland." So she got up, went to her door, and asked, "Whom has God sent to me in the middle of the night?"

"Open the door, old woman, the GPU has come for you," replied one of the Devil's stepsons.

"Only the Devil could send such as you!" Martha Ignatyevna shouted at them.

"You have come as thieves and you will have to get into this room like thieves. I will not open the door to you of my own free will." The old woman stopped speaking and moved away from the door, expecting that they would force it to open.

The Devil's stepsons discussed among themselves what they had better do. They decided not to break down the door, for fear of creating a commotion—the house was very big, a great number of people lived in it, and all the rooms were next to each other—and this was specially secret assignment. They failed to arrest her because the old woman possessed an indomitable courage, which saved her from the agents of GPU when they came to fetch her that night.

So, they returned to the GPU headquarters and reported to their chief. He approved of what they had done—needless to say, one must not go causing any disturbance during such secret operations—it could ruin the illusory impression of a happy life in the Soviet town. That would be unthinkable!

"Go there tomorrow morning," said the GPU chief, "when the workers are all at the factories doing good udarnik<sup>2</sup> work, and the housewives are out enjoying themselves in the Soviet socialist way—standing in line waiting to buy bread, or whatever there will be delivered that day on the empty shelves in the cooperative store. Only remember, don't make any noise."

The pair of the Devil's stepsons set out the next morning, as if they had no particular object in view. The old woman had just poured the boiling water from her samovar into a tea-brewing pot to have the tea-brew ready for the whole day. She was wishing that she had some sugar to sweeten it.

At that moment the two uninvited guests suddenly arrived. There they were, the GPU agents standing on her very threshold! But Martha Ignatyevna was a brave woman. Holding the pot of boiling tea in one hand and pointing to the door with the other, she shouted at them in an extremely threatening manner, "Get out of my house or I will throw the whole samovar at you!" And she gestured with her hands showing how she would do it. "And if that does not hit you, there is the saucepan boiling on the stove. I'll pour the whole lot on you, but I will never give myself alive!"

The pair of the stepsons of the Devil retreated out of the door because, of course, that would create an awful din and the chief had ordered that there was to be no noise. Then there was another inconvenience waiting for them outside. Although in the morning there were fewer people in the big house, there were enough of those who were asleep, because they worked in the second or the third shift. They had been awakened by the old woman's shouting and hurried outside in their underwear to see what was going on; all were standing in a semicircle quite close to Martha Ignatyevna's door.

Therefore, the two GPU agents talked it over about what to do and then quietly went back to the GPU headquarters to report. The comrade chief of the GPU cursed the pair heartily, but then he decided, "Let the pernicious old witch live in peace. She may well die soon of old age. Her life is not worth even a Soviet kopeck anyway."

The GPU chief didn't even file a report about this incident, fearing reprisal by his superiors. And, of course, the GPU agents said nothing about this to anyone either. But, nevertheless from that day on, the whole town knew that old Martha Ignatyevna had sent the GPU agents packing out of her home. This was a very rare occurrence! Perhaps the only one of its kind in the whole Soviet Union.





## Stupid Uncultured Broad

Comrade Terkin is a small yet prominent and, most importantly, much needed person—no one could live without him. He, as a director of marketing, has as his buddies the secretary of the Town Party Committee and the chairman of the Town Soviet, and even the head of the city NKVD (State Secret Police) branch pays attention to him. The only problem was that his wife was shorting him out a little. She was a simple broad. Uncultured.

You could not take her anywhere, neither to a party nor the theater. She begins blushing, gets embarrassed, cannot put two words together from fear, wears pre-deluge fashion village dresses; in one word, she lacks any basic understanding of socialistic culture. And as if that was not enough, a misfortune happened. She lost two teeth at once—and both in front. What shame. It's like you can't even open your mouth. At least that was a right reason to be embarrassed.

Comrade Terkin kept nagging and nagging at his wife about her uncultured manners and his nagging finally brought him his own harm—his wife decided to become cultured.

"I want a velvet dress," said Stepanida Kalistratovna one day. "And 'sfeldi-Persian' hose!" she demanded next, "Cotton hose looks cheap with the velvet."

"Just look at her name!" thought comrade Terkin, "it just spells old regime!" But as the director of marketing there was no problem of obtaining a velvet cut and the wife got her wish.

"The winter is coming and I don't have a fur coat! I heard the party chairman's wife ordered the second one for herself."

And it began. Every day. Terkin was unhappy and a little afraid for his cushy job, even though he was evasive and proven like an old tried and true member of the party.

"I wanna smoke!" was her new demand.

"Wha-a-a-at!" cried the marketing director with indignation, "To show your toothless mouth?"

Stepanida Kalistratovna kept quiet, but the next day she proclaimed, "Golden teeth!"

Comrade Terkin got really scared this time. But it was not the gold that scared him. For the party member anything should be available. He took pity on his wife.

"Have you gone mad Stepanida!"

"Why mad? Epifanikha, even she has golden teeth, and her husband is only a shop assistant!"

"You're stupid woman you, Stepanidushka! Do you know that they are going to dig into your gums? They must make holes in your jaws for your golden teeth. You'll suffer so much pain!..."

It did not help. Stepanida Kalistratovna started smoking. She held the cigarette with her golden teeth with a purpose. She became cultured.

## Highly Educated Pedagogues

When you enter the enormous building of the Educational Training Center, you can hear somewhere from afar a hysterical thin voice. You begin to imagine that someone is crying or howling, maybe someone is being tortured, tormented by the most cruel devices of brute force. However, if you have visited here before, then you recall... Ah? Yes, it's pedagogue Perekotienko who is reading a lecture on the current events—always the same lecture during the entire school year—for every course of technical school and Rabfac, the so called workers' faculty.

Once, after one of such heart-rending "lectures" a loud crowd of students piled into the office of the assistant principal of the education department.

"Petr Ivanovich! Petr Ivanovich! What is restoration?"

Petr Ivanovich, took off his glasses and looked inquisitively at the heated faces of the young people. He knew that this was the latest kink of pedagogue Perekotienko, who taught social science, and loved to use foreign words, with which he attempted to impress his students as highly educated person.

"Restoration means renewal, revival, or reestablishment..."

"You see, we told Matvey Ivanovich that Trotskyites could not have restored the soviet regime, but he gets angry and wants to put the question about the discipline issue before the general students meeting... We even showed him the "Big Soviet Encyclopedia," but there is no way of convincing him?.."

Assistant principal, who was not a party member, didn't want to acerbate the students' opinion about the party member pedagogue and he just calmed them with a promise, "Don't you worry about the students' meeting – we will solve the problem of discipline at the teachers and pedagogues meeting. But you were wrong to argue during the lecture..."

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In the twilight hour, the teachers were sitting in the teacher's lounge of the Educational Training Center waiting for the classes to begin. The teaching staff was divided into pedagogues and instructors. The pedagogues were people with an education from a communist higher education institution. The instructors were simple folk—mere mortals—who had either university or college education.

For some reason those with the party membership cards believed, that to be called a pedagogue was better, makes it sound more learned, almost like a professor.

The pedagogue Perekotienko, who in a recent past worked as a mine electrician, was a radio enthusiast. He only had one problem that he zealously was trying to hide, yet to no avail. He was a semi-literate man, even though he graduated from a *comvus*—Communist Higher Education Institution. Higher education—no argument there. Yet, his semi-literacy hindered his genius invention in the field of radio technology, which was supposed to stun the world. To tell the truth, the invention itself did not exist yet, however it was about to come into the communist world—all that was needed was a

little fixing of some elements, redoing, a little perfecting, reworking, imitating, applying, simplifying, in brief, “perpetual motion” was about to be born.

As always, he was having a quiet conversation with the physics instructor about electricity trying to find out from the learned colleague some hints for his project. One word often heard from their conversation—“elements.”

This word was irritating the ear of another pedagogue Makovkina, pedagogue of Russian language and literature. She was a woman of ample size, with unusually low throaty alto voice and wife of a Bolshevik Party member and a Chief of Mining Administration. But in her own right she was a party member of proletarian origins and a graduate from some *comvuz*.

To her, a highly educated pedagogue of language and literature, this word was so irritating, that she could not contain herself, “I am so tired of your talks!” she said to the conversants, “At home the husband is always talking about criminal “aliments”, here the chemist all day blabbers about some periodic “aliments,” and you have the same “aliments” to talk about! It seems that all of you men have the same “aliments” illness!”

The instructors did not get a chance to smile at the ignorance of “highly educated” pedagogue of language. The bell had interrupted their peaceful conversation, and everyone rushed to their auditoriums—note, not classrooms!

Since that day, the physics and chemistry teachers were demanding from their students that they write the word “elements” correctly.

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While substituting as the inspector of the city branch of national education, the school principal Khvorostov was looking through the forms of the city and district teachers. In one of them, the teacher of a far isolated farmstead school wrote as an answer to her social status, “Worker’s-peasant’s.”

Khvorostov became pensive, “Which one is the worker—mother or father? Which one is the peasant? Since he did not find an answer to this in the form, he decided, “To have a perfect social status, soon they are going to write: ‘Worker’s-peasant’s and socialist’s-communist’s.’”

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A woman of thirty or so seeking a position as a Russian Language and History teacher, was sitting in front of the inspector of the people’s education department telling him about her previous job.

She was an impeccable worker, of course, but the principal of the school in which she worked before took a dislike to her for some reason, and now she is compelled to seek a position in a different school.

The inspector asked the secretary to bring him the teacher’s personal file.

The secretary brought a big green folder, in which various files covered with different handwritings and inks were kept. The inspector opened one of the files where in the column marked “education” he read: “higher-middle.”

“Well,” he thought, “once we had tobacco of middle to high quality called Mesacsudi or Stamboli, so why can’t the education in the soviet times be such as well?! It’s a pity it is not as strong!”

He let the teacher go, and promised her to satisfy her request. He as a person

unaffiliated with the party could not argue with the Bolshevik party member.

## Buryonushka on Strike

They decided to let us have cows. By us, they meant peasants. That is, collective farmers. The government allowed it. They said it was Comrade Stalin himself who said so. He even got outraged that a collective farm peasant didn't have a cow. At least that's what the rumors had been. But if he said himself, then certainly the government couldn't object—allow me to give my opinion on “object”—not only it could not object but it proclaimed an admiration for such stroke of genius. How is it possible that not a single person so far had come to such a brilliant idea that every collective farm peasant should have a cow? What Marxist depth! What a communist approach! This is a historical resolution, of most exceptional importance!

In short, the government had admired such resolution that, as you know, permitted to the collective farm peasant to own Buryonushka – a cow.

What kind you ask? The usual kind of a cow. No matter what kind, but she should have horns, ears, thoughtful eyes, a mouth, tail, hide, and, of course, the milk appliance – the udders. Oh, I almost left out the most important fact – she must breathe.

Kholmogorochka – you are suggesting? How awfully backward of you! What in the world could be the use of a Kholmogorochka? This is not the old regime. Now these Kholmogorochkas of yours—Ha!—are nothing, a backward element in the cows' socialist society – cows' enemies who are hindering the socialist cows' production and communist cows' culture. Now a new era had come to all spheres of life – an era of durable steel and more than that – stainless steel. Now a cow needs to be Stalinist, and not anything like Kholmogorochkas.

Let us think things over the socialists' way. What can give you Kholmogorochkas? Only milk. And even that not always of the best quality because some of them may have an unhealthy political inclination—either to the right or to the left—and, therefore, have a premeditated reduction of fat content in milk.

But a Stalinist's cow Buryonushka is completely different kind. Do you know that she is worker's-class-seasoned, completely politically-conscious; she over-fulfils her program output as a Stakhanovite, and, most important, meets the present moment requirements of the party and government. And their demand is such: “Stalin's cow, give us butter straight from the udder. We mean, no milk, only the butter.”

Of course, government had their reasonable calculations. If the collective farm peasant would have Kholmogorochka – she would give milk. Then the butter had to be made from milk. How much unproductive time would it involve? How many hours it would take the collective farm woman to be away from her primary obligations on the collective farm? Also, it was no secret that her hungry kids will guzzle milk, and maybe a collective farm woman herself and her husband and – then watch – their elderly parents would want some too.

But, you see, with the Stalin's cow Buryonushka there is entirely different story. Let's say that the collective farm woman will go and milk this conscientious cow, and right there in the milk pail instead of milk – butter drops with each squirt: “Dzyg-dzyg,

dzyg-dzyg...” And that’s all, exactly as demanded by the government – everything is in order. The butter-tax in kind completely guaranteed.

Shortly, without delving into the maze of reasoning to determine the methods of acquisition of these Buryonushkas, let’s simply say that such Buryonushkas just appeared at the courtyards of some collective farm peasants. And no sooner than Buryonushka arrived to the collective farm peasant for personal use, the government recited (it seems in white poetry style) a new decree. This time a decree was about the butter-tax. Of course, tax in kind.

It is not known exactly what happened in the communist cow’s society but Buryonushka cows went on strike – even those owned by the collective farm chairman and by the secretary of agricultural party organization. The cows were giving milk, but the butter – it is your choice, comrade collective farm women – you may make butter, or not, but we, the cows, have fulfilled our milk quota.

It is possible to assume, of course without saying a word, that our beloved leader was not able to bring into his socialist-communist world sufficient quantity of Stalin’s Buryonushka cows, and to the collective farm peasants arrived only some kind of Kholmogorochkas and they, it is known, are the enemy of cows. Then these much praised Kholmogorochkas went to sabotage this important historical decision of the party and the government by giving exclusively only milk.

Naturally, collective farm woman milks her Kholmogorochka, brings the milk to the hut, but in the hut, it is plain to see, are kids and the rest of the family, and the result – not a single gram of butter is made.

You see, when the government decided to allow the collective farm peasant to own a cow, then, so to speak, it had done this not with all their soul or with all their heart, because this institution is lacking in such organs. But still it did throw aside all restraints – live, they said, wealthy! And when they recited the new decree about the butter-tax in kind, then it was found out to be Leninist, meaning – rotting like him in the Kremlin’s backyard. It says, “Give everything to the government, otherwise I declare you to be an ‘enemy of the people.’”

The Buryonushkas, as it is known, went on strike – they did not want to give butter. The collective farm women caretakers did all they could, but the cow quietly on the sly – gives only milk, but doesn’t want to give butter.

The poor collective farm woman then takes the milk to the hut and there are little Vanyas, Mashas, Sashas, and Mishas...It is sure where the milk is going! There is no milk left to make the butter. But one has to hand in to the government the butter-tax in kind.

How it could be? What is to be done? Not only one wants to live but little Vanyas and Mashas still need parents’ attention!

It was then that the comrades collective farm women rushed to the city. Out of their own mouths they took everything possible. It was taken away to the market and sold. Then with the money – directly to the *Gastronom*. To buy the butter... for the butter-tax in kind.

And that same *Gastronom* is not a simple store – it is commercial. Prices are commercial. Comrades collective farm women filled in the whole store, pushed out the townspeople, and stood in line. All this – quietly, peacefully. They stood and didn’t even look at the goods and their mouths are not made to water... They didn’t even look at the

common herring. And how many goods were there! But their eyes were not dazzled. They couldn't tear their eyes away from the butter. Will it be enough? The butter needs to be given out as butter-tax in kind.

So, in the course of several days, the peasant women, collective farm women that is, came from the country to the city to buy the butter. In those days it was the only thing sold at the *Gastronom*. Everyone working the counter was busy dispensing only butter. Not a single town dweller could get into the store due to the large crowd of collective farm women gathered outside the door starting in the early morning waiting for *Gastronom's* opening.

Collective farm women were paying thirty-five rubles for a kilo of butter, they walked across the street to the government tax office and handed in their established norm of a butter-tax in kind. Then there was no butter in the city. That is what comes of these Kholmogorochkas! And all thanks to the Stalin's cows Buryonushkas.

## Dear Cow's Business

*"In comparison with last year, yield of milk raised five times..."*  
– Radio-Moscow, May 18, 1954

Not always one had to write about human affairs. Sometimes business of livestock is more important than our own. And in some progressive countries dear government and wise party attach huge importance to this business. Many congresses and conferences are devoted to it, they pass huge resolutions about it, the longest columns in newspapers are written about it—editorials, leading articles, special articles and scientific articles are printed, and even writers and poets compose about it in their own genre... And all this on the subject of livestock!

Of course we are modest. We do not think that our article will be the leading article or even the special article, because in the capitalist countries for some reason, they do not attach such importance to the livestock. It even is a pity—because many people could make money on this business...

Well, once upon the time there was living a cow. The most ordinary cow. It fed on, as it is known, grass and hay. Sometimes her caretaker would bring her a hunk of generously salted-on-top-bread. One could call it a dainty morsel. And the cow paid her mistress back with milk. Everyone was happy. The cow was happy with the mistress, the mistress was happy with her cow. Meanwhile, in the market the buyers were happy with the cow and the mistress.

It was like this before the most wonderful revolution happened. Now freedom came. It is clear, everyone was liberated—the mistress from the cow and the cow from the mistress. And everyone started to live quite independently. The cow is not exploited by the private owner anymore. And the mistress has less obligations. No extra work anymore in the house. In a word, life became very good for everyone.

They say that the mistress, in the time of the new communist order, finds rotten potato somewhere or simply eats orach<sup>1</sup> grass and somehow survives. But her cow died long ago... It appears that the cattle cannot live long by eating straw. And there are no more of those warm cowsheds that mistress used to take care of... So, that's why the cow is disappearing from the communist world.... Soon it will be a rarity. They will show her in the zoos.

In any case, the collective leadership occasionally ponders, "Why, they ask, the cow does not thrive in conditions of the greatest care of party and government? What else does she need? Is it not enough all those different conferences, historical decisions, decrees, Stakhanov's<sup>2</sup> movement of the milkmaids, and socialist agreements between collective farms? Why the cow does not want to live?"

They talk a lot, write a lot, and publish a lot of cow's literature but no one thinks to grow good grass, no one thinks to mow nice hay for the winter and the poor cow must chew straw and... finds a sad death in the collective farm cold and dirty cowshed...

So, the dear wise men began to think about what to do, how to help the cow's



grief.

"You, dear cow, don't fail, You, dear cow, be patient—in two or three years, we will sow for you the grass and mow the hay, and we will build the warm cowsheds for you, we will, dear cow, for you..."

But dear cow does not wait. Dear cow continues to die...

And the government and wise party started to think and decided all together with the collective leadership to develop Stakhanov's movement...

And what do you think? They did. On the very next day they wrote in the newspaper that cows took on a new life. The cow read the decision of dear Soviet government and the wise communistic party and joined in the socialist competition. And the cow came up in the world! They say that soon they will put Order of Lenin on her neck!

And why not to put it on? Every year the cow raises yields of milk no less, no more, than five times! In the first year of a Five-Year Plan, when the cow finally stopped to sabotage historical decisions of dear government and wise party, she gave only one cubic centimeter of milk. In the second year—five cubic centimeters. In the third—twenty-five. In the fourth—one-hundred-and-twenty-five. In the fifth—six-hundred-and-twenty-five cubic centimeters of milk per day. Good or bad, but the yield of milk is growing!

"Dear and wise" are sitting, counting up, smiling and winking to each other: "We shall surprise the whole world with communist yields of milk!"

And what do you think? They did. According to all plans dear cows don't give up the pace—she raises the yield of milk always five times! Each new year, the new Stakhanov's success! In the first year of the second Five-Year Plan, the cow showed "first class" in her work: eighteen-thousand-one-hundred-and-twenty-five cubic centimeters of milk per day! And by the end of Five-Year Plan: two million two-hundred-and-sixty-five thousand six-hundred-and-twenty-five cubic centimeters of milk a day!

And you thought that socialism-communism, it's to be sneezed at?..

And if there were not capitalists' surrounding, it would be... Soon the dairy flood is to come... Not from a nuclear or hydrogen bomb the capitalist world would perish, but from the dairy flood. Capitalist cows will not sustain a communist competition! Revolution is coming! The resolute fight will bring, of course, the victory to communism! Because dear cow now is well grounded all one-hundred per cent by Marxism! Well, and the worker could wait for two, three more years...

## Beloved Leader

In 1934 I was coming back home from the city Dmitrovsk to Moscow on a workers' train. Workers from suburbs and the nearest villages were riding to night shift work. The train arrived at Poveletsky station. At the dead-end of the rail line stood the railway club car, which had recently made the round trip to the small stations of the Northern railway in honor of the "railway workers day." In a big window of this car was flaunted a portrait of the "beloved leader," Stalin.

A noisy cheerful crowd of workers poured out from the cars. In front of me there walked a group of workers from which stood out a slim young man that was one head taller than the others. His fair hair was fluttering in a light breeze, the lively healthy face was cheerfully smiling. He was briskly telling something to his friends. But coming close to the car with Stalin's portrait he suddenly stopped and gave a scream, "Ah, you, the prostitute of the Soviet Union!"

Nobody expected such "outpouring of love and fidelity" to "our dear leader and teacher." For a moment, this group of workers was confused, but having regained consciousness, everybody begun to hustle about; the fair-haired head disappeared and dissolved in a crowd of passing passengers. Everyone who was close, who clearly heard the cry of "love," which probably came spontaneously for the young man himself, walked by pretending that they hadn't noticed anything. Nobody even searched with their eyes to find out where the initiator of the event had disappeared.

At the streetcar stop near the station the young man was already standing in a circle of his friends, and guiltily justified, "I really don't know myself how did happened..."

The elderly worker paternally advised him, "You, Vasya, better not look at such "pictures," it will be safer for you..."

## By Force of Inertia

The indescribable whirlwind of war rushed across the land, destroying little people's little lives. Some perished defending their homeland and they and even their names disappeared without trace; others, having saved their lives, also disappeared after they returned, willingly or unwillingly, to their own country; still others choose the endless wanderings in foreign lands over the forever fearful existence they had once led in Russia.

Leaving one's native land is not easy. Thousands of invisible threads bind one to it. There are one's kith and kin, and one's friends, and one's memories of those who are no more, and the dear hopes of one's youth. Here life has started, or, for some, has been lived almost through, among people close to one by blood, by customs, by language and by hidden faith; one's home for many years, the place one has made warm by living there, roof, and the simple comforts—there is no way to list all the ties attaching one to Moscow, to Petersburg, or to some Ivanovka or Bakhmut.

And so, the people were scattered over the wide world, they found refuge and work to do, and they obtained at last what they had never had at home—peace of mind.

Olga, too, was tossed by her own whirlwind destiny to sunny Italy, the country of the magic sounds, colors, precise marble lines, monuments of remote history. She boldly entered this alien life, spread her young wings, won her right to live as others live.

Visions of the past stand out before her eyes—pictures of her childhood, preserved by her mother's loving heart and her father's tenderness from the cruel reality outside; pictures of her youth, safeguarded by caring hands from the blood-drenched everyday life of her native land. There is, in these pictures of the past, the love for one's dear ones and the near ones; and friendship, and vague dreams and lofty aspirations that carry one away into the silvery distance; there are live faces in them, with simple names and simple Russian soul—her family and friends. An uncomplicated little world, but memory will never erase those images of the past that have entered deep into a human soul. This is why the remote Moscow feels so close, why the remote friends are close, and so close is a little house in a far-away town in southern Russia. This is why, in the midst of her daily work and cares, the image of Yasha, her schoolmate, will suddenly appear, and she hears again the voice whispering the prescient words: "If they kill me, pray for my innocent soul..."

Yasha Voronov was a Komsomol member. Why? First, because his father who—however, he did not remember—had been a partisan during the Civil War and fought against the Whites. The other reason was that this made school easier, and could make college admittance quite easy, too.

His elongated face with sunken cheeks was pale. Wavy chestnut-colored hair covered his narrow head; he was gaunt, emaciated, and had a sickly smile that seemed somehow strained. In his strange gray eyes there always lurked a glimmer, but of a fire that seemed to be dying to ashes.

Yasha was the only son of the mother, a downtrodden, neglected woman—the

widow of a once-famous partisan. Her poverty, bordering on the abject, forced her from time to time to send her son out on prolonged visits to her “wealthy” relatives, to her cousin’s family. These were the only intervals when Yasha felt that he was, as it were, really living.

That family was not, of course, wealthy in the sense in which it was meant in the older times; but the wife of his mother’s cousin earned at least as much by her private music lessons as her engineer husband did at his place of work. At any rate, Yasha could forget, while living with this family, the misery at his own home, his mother’s drudgery and their half-starving existence.

Because he was so sickly, the results of his studies at his ten-year school were mediocre at best, even though the school director, a woman who was a Party member, pulled hard trying to make an honors student out of him. But it was in vain. She could persuade the teacher of social science to inflate his grades, but with other teachers that was not possible.

When he reached the tenth grade, he met Olya, his classmate. She was a new student at that school, and, on entering the classroom for the first time, she sat down at the first empty place that met her gaze, which turned out to be next to him. From the first days, they became friends.

Olya was an excellent student, she read a lot, all the courses of study came easy to her, without cramming. Her memory was so good that she never had to prepare for the next day’s lessons as most other students did; she need only perform the written homework out of duty. Still, no matter how well she studied, she, and some other students like her, could never become honors students. Neither the school director, who was also a chemistry teacher, nor the social studies teacher, who taught the history of the Communist Party, ever graded her work above “good”. The girl knew the only reason for that was that her parents were from a “have been” family—pre-revolutionary intelligentsia. Her Communist teachers knew about that, and their social class hatred expressed itself in grades that were blatantly unfair. She was not the only student like that—they all were filled with indignation, but no one dared to speak aloud about the reigning injustice.

In school all the students addressed each other using the familiar “thou” pronoun of the Russian language; this custom probably originated in the Komsomol. Between Yasha and Olya, this addressing felt perfectly natural, because of the simple friendship between them. Frequently, Olya would help her friend to understand a physical law, to solve a trigonometric equation, to make sense of the electrolytic dissociation in chemistry, or to help him write a homework composition in Russian, or to prepare a report for the social studies class. In all this, she would never make him feel that she was smarter than he was, nor did she make noticeable her lack of Party affiliation. Yasha felt gratitude to his new friend; their friendship deepened with time, and he was more candid with her than with other classmates.

“Why don’t you join the Komsomol?” he asked one time.

“Komsomol? Is that necessary?”

“But you would be an honors student then!”

“I know that, Yasha, but... you know I’d be out of place in the Komsomol.”

“Why? I talked about you several time with the Komsomol friends. They would find it interesting to have you as a member of organization... And you would be an

honors student, you know!"

"No, Yasha, I don't want to buy my 'honors.'"

"But that must be hurting your pride."

"Pride? No. But it is true, I have a disdain for the director Malikova and for the orthodox social studies teacher, and sometimes I get a feeling that I know more than they do."

"Oh, Olga, the whole class says this. But I'd still like to give you some good advice... You know, you help me so much... I owe you a lot..."

"Oh, don't, Yasha, you owe me no thanks for that. I do it really for myself. I can't bear seeing somebody not understanding something. And your advice... is that about Komsomol again?"

"Yes, Olya. Look, the exams are coming soon. Of course, you'll get the certificate. But there's now a law: honors students are admitted to universities and institutes without entrance tests. And you're planning to enter the Power Institute, aren't you?"

"Can we speak candidly, Yasha?"

"Yes, Olya, you know yourself I'm not one of 'those'..." that hint referred to informers.

"Komsomol is not for me. Komsomol won't give me any knowledge. As for the entrance examinations—I'll try to compete. There was a big competition last year, probably this year it will be even bigger."

Yasha wanted to do something for his friend to repay her, but he was convinced now that his advice was unacceptable to her.

But the girl continued. "So we are talking freely?"

"Yes, Olya..."

"What is Komsomol doing for you?"

The youth hesitated. "Well, you see... Here I am studying..."

"Candor can hurt sometimes, Yasha..."

"No, you say what you are really thinking. I value your words more than those of... Komsomol."

"Fine. We'll remain friends as before, because I wish you nothing but good."

"Oh sure, speak on..."

"Komsomol is helping you with your grades..." Olga looked at her friend intently.

"And my past is helping, too." Yasha added, and the little glimmer in his eyes brightened for a moment with the joy which may be brought by a spoken word of truth that has long been hidden even from those closest to one.

"I don't know your past."

"The merit is really my father's, not mine. He was a partisan in the Civil War, he fought against the counterrevolution..."

"Was he killed?"

"No, he died... long ago... I hardly remember..."

"Then I understand why you're defending Komsomol so much."

"No, Olya, I only advised you... to make life easier for you..."

The girl knew how her classmate lived and she asked, "And are you living well?"

"I wasn't speaking about that..."

"No, no, wait a minute, speak candidly. Your father was a partisan, your father defended the Soviet power, your father believed in the Communist ideas, and those

ideas made him take up arms; he was victorious, and died. What became of your mother?"

Yasha was silent, his eyes downcast.

"You grew up weak and sickly, but you, too, probably joined Komsomol because you believed in its ideas?"

"That was in the beginning..."

"And now?"

"By force of inertia, ...maybe it would be easier to live... They do help me with the school now..."

"I am afraid, Yasha, that you will be making a mistake..."

"But there's no turning back..."

"Turning back from where?"

"One can't leave the Komsomol..."

"Oh, that's it! Very well, Yasha, I understand that. You don't have to leave... Though it would be better for you... Better... Just as long as you preserve your soul such as it is now. The problem is not in Komsomol, but in that untruth that is seeping from every corner of our life... Maybe you don't know it, don't see it... did not experience it on your own back..."

"I know, Olga, that you do deserve to be an honors student..."

"No, no," the girl interrupted hotly, "That's a trifle, Yasha... There are more serious things, but I can't speak of them."

"Are you afraid?"

"No, it's not my secret."

"And that untruth, Olya, I know probably as well as you do. What my father did for the revolution was not so huge, but still, his family deserved greater attention and we were starving... How many Party and Soviet doors closed into my mother's face when she came to ask for some help for herself and for me, when I was a baby?! I know all that but I always thought that these are local aberrations, alien to Communism, but..."

"You were mistaken?"

"Yes, I was."

"And you still remain in the Komsomol?"

"By force of inertia... and one can't leave, Olya..."

"Why not?"

"I would be their enemy all lifelong, and maybe a greater enemy even than some former White guard... And as to what befalls such people, you probably know as well as I do..."

"Well, Yasha, just try to keep your soul, such as it is now..."

Days went by. Spring had already decorated the gardens, bright sun looked into the school's windows, the breeze wafted the odor of flowers from the neighboring yard. Boys and girls intently listen to the voice of knowledge, preparing for the coming examinations. Each young head was filled with the same hope: graduate successfully, and then—to the center—to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, or Kharkov. Each of them had already set an objective—university or institute—and each one tried to be prepared for the entrance examinations, to get as many "excellent" grades as possible.

Yasha almost never left Olga's house now. He snatched eagerly at her every word, repeated it, asked questions, made notes, but his tutor saw how difficult learning was

for him, and she suffered.

The exams ended. Of course, neither Olga nor Yasha received an honors certificate. When many other worthy students found that they, like Olga, did not graduate with honors, they were so indignant that they had an intention to call a meeting and vote a protest. But Olga told them, "You won't improve your or my certificate by this."

Yasha added, "You would only hurt yourselves by this... But you and Olga will force one's way to success anyway..."

They rested through the summer. The schoolmates still met, they went to the park to listen to the music, to the lake, to the movies. They dreamed aloud and sometimes the same indignation broke out, "And now we and Olga have to pass the entrance exams to the universities and colleges!"

By fall, the dreams subsided. Separation loomed, and then serious studies, "It won't be like it was in the ten-year school!"

Some of them quit, decided to give up on college—the competition was tough and with the mediocre school certificate—they are likely to flunk us at the exams anyway; some were afraid that, according to a new law, they would have to pay the tuition, and not everybody could afford that.

Yasha, too, decided to give up university. "How can I compete? I don't have enough basic knowledge..."

And Olga went to Moscow. The competition was unheard of—more than eight candidates for each vacancy!

She came back in a month. She had an "excellent" grade in each subject.

"I knew you'd do it," Yasha met her, "But weren't you nervous anyway?"

"Oh, no, I was calm and self-assured all the time..."

The girl packed and left for the far-away Moscow, the dream of young hearts yearning for knowledge.

The first year of studies ended. Olga was succeeding here as she had in ten-years-school. But here, one could breathe easier, though one had to study assiduously. The professors did not inquire about a Komsomol card. Tests went without a glitch, and her academic record-book was filling with "excellent" marks, signed with hands of famous minds. One more test, and she could go home. But then the war broke out. The exams were over. All Komsomol members were mobilized. A small group of non-members was left, and they all were trying to get out of Moscow as soon as possible, to get home.

Olga arrived to her hometown at night. Lights were off, no traffic in the streets, and there was a curfew—one could not walk the streets at nighttime. Only in the morning did she get to her parents' home.

She knew already that Yasha was working at one of the factories, in a Komsomol organization, and that he was not as destitute as before, because his salary, though small, was at least sufficient for food and clothing. She also learned that the medical commission, stringent as it was at the start of the war, released him completely from military service.

Olga was waiting impatiently for her old schoolmate, to share her Moscow impressions with him, but Yasha was so busy with wartime Komsomol business that he had no free minute to visit his mother's cousin and his wife, who lived in the house next

to her.

However, one afternoon Yasha dropped in suddenly and went directly to Olga. "Well, where is the power engineer?" she heard his new mature voice.

"At last! Is that the way to treat one's friends!"

"Had no time, Olechka, believe me, no time even to breathe. If it wasn't for the army, I wouldn't have come even now."

"What army?" Olga asked in surprise.

"What army? The Red Army, of course... I came to say goodbye..."

"You? To the army?"

"Yes, I am leaving for the army."

"But they released you!"

"That was the medical commission, yes..."

"I don't understand, Yasha, what is the matter?"

"The Komsomol decreed: 'As a matter of Komsomol discipline, everybody must go as a volunteer.'"

"The Komsomol decreed?"

"Yes, Olya."

"But what kind of soldier will you make?"

"No matter, I have to obey..."

"But what if you..."

"No, no, that is impossible now, it's even dangerous..."

"But why? You do have grounds..."

"The medical commission?"

"Yes, that..."

"If the country is dying, then the death of one miserable sick Komsomol member means nothing!"

"But it is not only unfair, it is cruel!"

"Do you think so? Anyway, it doesn't matter what you think. I have no choice. By force of inertia, do you remember that?"

"Hide, run away, I'll talk to Papa..."

"No, no, Olya, this is impossible. We can still talk candidly as before?"

"Of course, Yasha, what a question!"

"I cannot help going now; if I don't... they'll kill me... And this way there is a risk... I might survive..."

"Why would they kill you?"

"You're naïve, even though you got into institute... Such is the law of Soviet life... Well, farewell, my dear friend. I have no time..."

"It hurts me enough to make me cry, parting with you, Yasha. This is so unfair... So then, good bye, my dear friend! Maybe you can leave me a photo of you, as a keepsake?"

"Sentimentalism?"

"No, Yasha, materialism. I want to have a material object reminding me of you, so I can look sometimes into your gray eyes and ask, 'How are you doing out there, you Komsomol member?'"

Yasha rummaged through his pockets. "You're lucky, I found a photo. One should write something on it?"



"Yes, of course!"

With an indelible pencil, Yasha wrote: "To the best friend of my youth. Yasha."

Handing her the snapshot, he added: "If they kill me, pray for my innocent soul..."

He put the photo in her hand and ran rapidly for the exit. From far off, near the gate, she heard, "Farewell!.."

Olga recalled the last words and brushed a tear off. Her heart was heavy. Moscow and the institute moved somewhere far away, perhaps forever...

About three weeks later, the first wounded soldiers were brought to the town. An old medical nurse, the mother of Yasha's aunt, carefully washed away the frontline dirt, arranged complicated bandages, comforted the sufferers, talked with those whose wounds were light. She thought of asking about Yasha, "Have you met Yasha Voronov, a Komsomol volunteer?"

People stirred in the hospital room, even the heavily wounded tried to lift up their heads, "Yasha? A skinny, pale boy? Voronov?"

"Yes, yes, with wavy chestnut hair and a pointed nose."

The wounded men hesitated. "And who is he to you?" asked one of them, with a bandaged arm.

"Just an acquaintance," she lied, observing their unease.

"There is no Yasha, nurse, not even his body. A shell hit a truck in which he was sitting. They only picked up pieces of him, and sprinkled them a little with soil..."

"O my God!" These words escaped the lips of the old nurse, but she dared not cross herself in the presence of the Red Army men. "How did this happen!"

"It's like that, nurse—nobody has taught us anything. We all came straight to the front from home. No one even knew how to hold a rifle. We were going down the Smolensk motor road. The Germans started throwing shells at us. The trucks stopped. Those who had some training, jumped from the truck and into a ditch, but we were just sitting there, waiting to die... Yasha was in the second truck from me... Then I heard something wheeze by, just over my head, I didn't even bend over, and behind me—bang! I only got a shell splinter in my arm, but over there—all black smoke and dirt flying up. Well then we, too, got running into ditches. The shelling ended. There was nothing left from the truck except burning pieces, and from the men—just hands, and feet, and heads... That's where Yasha Voronov is, too... On the Smolensk motor road... sprinkled with soil..."

The bitter news reached Olga, too. She cried some, then she prayed for his innocent soul.

And now the memories of her dear Moscow, of native Russia, come to her, and among the daily worries and the hard work, an image appears of Yasha, the Komsomol member, with a soul innocent and as pure as crystal...

Looking through old photographs, she encounters the familiar face of her schoolmate, and remembers the fatal words, "By force of inertia..." and the last request, "If they kill me—pray for my innocent soul..."

She crosses herself and quietly puts the pictures in their place. There is no reason to look longer. The tragedy is too strong to recall anything more...

# Behind the Iron Curtain

Socialist Soviet System after World War Two,  
Cold War and Collective Leadership.

*Dedicated to the memory of millions of people in Russia,  
Ukraine and all other republics, as well as  
in the annexed by the Soviet Union Eastern Europe  
who lived without freedom  
and suffered under the oppressive socialist-communist  
regime.*

## Prologue – To Store Eternally

How much the soviet authority is cunning as a cat and cowardly as a hare! It was wrongdoing by taking law in its own hands committing bloody outrage and, becoming drunk from blood, committed even more and more wrongdoing, but... Oh! How it was feverishly shaking when it suddenly as a rabbit saw the bush! And than what? Like in a fairy tale screaming, "Here he is! Catch, catch him! The purse was stolen!" And it was not even a purse but a big bag with filthy "Pravda," which no one would take even for millions! Unless a very devoted one would take it. And this wrongdoer and cowardly authority lived, philosophizing craftily, until the year of nineteen hundred and forty-one.

On twenty-second of June under the shining sun from the clear sky the thunder burst, "The War!"

The sun dimmed and the depth of the sky turned black for these coward wrongdoers—perfidious Germans!—but they, cowardly-wrongdoers are not!

"Everybody to defend!" but they, the party-state, from the first day started to destroy the traces of their bloody wrongdoing authority. From the small town, day and night, three-ton trucks were removing especially secret papers to a steppe and dumping them in fire. However, there were not enough trucks. To help the operation the arabacarts with oxen arrived from collective and state farms. And fires started to flare.

And you, plebes, do not dare to come close to the sacred fire that is swallowing the super secret papers of the party-state importance! An extra step and sharp shot of the trained shooter will destroy without warning the "guilty" but truly guiltless "free" citizen of "the most free country in the world."

Is it not a secret for everybody, how for more than twenty years, the wrongdoers who at the same time shivered from fear, held godless authority over the Christians' souls.

They burned papers until the last day. And they burned until there were not even mobilization summonses left from the military committee. They ran to the printing house and somewhere in papers for recycling were found spoiled summonses. But there is one more trouble—there are summonses but there is no more the lists of military reservists. They already burned them... So they sent militiamen to pick reservists from the homes.

Well, at this point there are no stupid men. Some of them hid and some, nevertheless, came knowing beforehand that they would "perform a comedy"!

Wrongdoers-cowards without any signs of authority (what if some German would come up from underground?) gathering together about twenty or thirty men, assigned one as a senior, "Go to the order of..." And to the senior, under fear of high measure of punishment, give secret instruction, "Your weapons are over there..."

The military reservists pass over the bridge out of town—steppe, sunflowers and corn. Here the senior gives the command, "Smoke break!" and asks, "So, brothers, shall we smoke?"

"Why not smoke? There is no shag, the wrongdoers-cowards burned it down, but

we have plenty of self-grown tobacco.”

“We do not need to sit by the road and smoke like locomotives! There are corn and sunflower fields.” And they rush into thick growth. The military reservists smoke and have a chat about important and unimportant things and see that it is growing dark, “So what, brothers? Is it time to go? It is rather sad for our wives to sleep alone.”

October came. The wrongdoers-cowards blew up factories, mills, the stations, and went over the river. And there are no Germans. The middle of the bridge is resting in the shoaled river but still there is no enemy. At last, the last divisions are retreating. Actually, they are not divisions, but just some kind of gang.

“Have the Germans been in your place?” they ask.

“No.”

“So, who blew up everything?”

“Do you need to ask, if there was no mention even made about the Germans?”

And they disappeared. Very quietly. Secretly. In unknown direction. And, there are still no Germans!

People rushed to the plundered by the wrongdoers-cowards buildings and shops, they even reached to the city party committee and to the town council building and at last to the NKVD—People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

So it is here where this Monster left its bloody traces!

The traces flowed to the sewer manhole... They opened it and the stench came out... On top was a young worker with blonde hair... Below him was humpback teacher... And then—a monstrous mess...

They strangled them in sauna using steam, then “buried” them in the sewer manhole in the courtyard... For what? There were found several files with the terrible inscription on top: “TO STORE ETERNALLY.”

The War ended in 1945. The outside war. But the internal, permanent war does not have an end. In fact, even now, there are still used the notations in passports, such as “Was under the occupation.”

For what?

“Store eternally.”

Soviet bootlicker emigrants tell us, “What kind of silly things you are talking about!”

“And what are we? Blind? Deaf? Bribed? Frightened to death? Did we give promise not to disclose your secrets? Your militiamen themselves told us that the serial passport numbers are just coded notations: “worked in Germany,” “was in captivity,” “was exiled” even, “was a partisan!” And where are those Russian-Germans who were exiled after the war to the concentration camps? In fact, they did not come back to their familiar places!”

“Free” citizens of “the most free country in the world” are freed of freedom!

We know that our names are in those folders with the terrible inscription: “To store eternally!”

Some visit us here and are scared to talk, “What you mean! We live exactly the same way like you here! They even let us go to Jerusalem!”

So then why every emigrant-visitor sometimes, as if by chance, as if an acquaintance summons acquaintance, and sometimes they summon them to the infamous “institution” and ask directly, “Who else do you know? Neighbors?”

Acquaintances?” And the visitors say that they are afraid not to tell because next year they will not get visa! So, this way they turn the naïve “political” immigrants into collaborators. And for what? In order to store our names eternally.

And visitors from over there say, “There is like here!”

“Really like here? And students are striking? And there are progressive professors there, too?”

“Oh! No! Could our people ‘allow’ doing it?”

“And has every family a car? Can everyone freely go abroad?” They keep silent as if they do not hear it.

Not everybody can come here and we know about it for sure. They do not let everyone go. And those who arrive here before coming sign the papers—“to store eternally!” If they come here, they meanwhile notice our surnames—it is necessary for paying back to “dear authority” for permission received.

Those who go there and those who come here are obliged to be collaborators. They may deny, vow and swear that they are supposedly saints! It is a lie! Maybe they do not know themselves that they serve the red devil, but it is most likely that they store eternally their service because they did not lose conscience yet. They know that there is nothing dirtier or more villainous in the world!

We have a document-letter of one woman who was there, it states: “There is nothing forgotten...” only this one phrase is enough because it confirms what we saw—People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs folders with the terrible inscription on them:

“TO STORE ETERNALLY.”

## Geniuses

We all live a simple life and do not even notice, so to say, the most important things. And that is very bad. You know, our century is not like some kind of simple century, it is not ordinary, but a century of geniuses! Look at it yourself, wherever you point your finger you will certainly, without fail, hit a genius!

Leaders, let us say, existed before, too. Of course, there were all kinds of leaders. Anyway, what kind of leaders they were? They had neither wisdom, nor coryphaeus talent, nor, in the extreme cases, bandit traits! That's why they did not have any genius traits! Nowadays the leaders are of an entirely different character. Now, any leader is full of genius – boundless, widest, immense, infinite, and so on.

In the beginning of our century of geniuses we still could count leaders on our fingers, but at the present time this seems to be impossible, because there would not be enough, not only of your own fingers but also your neighbors and not-so-close acquaintances.

However, humanity should not forget the greatest geniuses and as much as possible to elect them by the secret, direct, and democratic voting as their idols. And idols are extremely necessary to have for every living and not independently thinking person. They, so to say, can make them happy and so on... "To make happy?" And what did you think? Let us remember the history in which our most brilliant geniuses, they also being idols, already made happy the entire peoples, not only individual personalities.

Genius N1 – Kerensky.<sup>1</sup> Made Russia happy by nightingale trills of his own creation. All criminal elements washed out the disgrace of their crime by the noble gesture of this idol that gave freedom to the prison inhabitants. The life with the genius No. 1 became better and more cheerful! The humanity almost became happy if there would not be...

Genius No. 2 – Lenin. Made Russia happy, giving to people everything that he never had. He promised to grant greater freedom than genius No. 1 did. The merit of the genius No. 2 was complete elimination of all unhappy people by shooting them. He could not finish to make people happy because of...

Genius No. 3 – Stalin. He created authentic socialism on the bases of the latest scientific data of—Stalinism mixed with genius of Leninism and Marxism. It is impossible to determine at the present time the cost of socialist happiness for lack of the precise data, but the approximate calculations tell us, that all of this pleasure made by genius personality cost only about twenty-five million of human lives, it is more for sure—the history would count it better in the future. As you can see, the number is very "insignificant." But this genius did not manage to make people completely happy because of his sudden disappearance into the netherworld. However, his business, which was left without a will, is continued now by his geniuses followers—called now as little geniuses—Collective leadership.

Genius No. 4 – Collective leadership.<sup>2</sup> By lack of time, it was not able to reveal itself completely, so to say, on the complete scale but according to all criteria, which

were revealed in short time of its existence, it is possible to speak boldly about the unsurpassed brilliant genius of this leadership. In any case, its first steps were characterized by the loss of cattle, by the exile of the young generation to the far places, for the reason of making people happy with the grain grown on the virgin land, and with the enormous progress in all spheres of the happy communist life, but the main thing, by the most brilliant geniuses promises to make population completely happy after two to three years, if by that time all soviet people will not die.

This, of course, should be taken in consideration by the immigrant population, in order not to lag from the native brothers who are imprisoned now in the happy worker's fatherland. In order that we, unfortunate immigrants, could avail ourselves of happiness, that our immigrant geniuses so generously scatter, we advise to hurry up with their election on the subject of making them, the geniuses, happy, and also that part of the immigrants, which will worship the elected idols. Mutual happiness, so to say.

As for geniuses, we do not have to discuss too much about them, in order not to lead someone into delusion. That is why we allow an opportunity, without advertisement, to use already existing geniuses, or to create for themselves the new ones, or even better the newest ones, or even the most new.

From the old ones we can recommend the most experienced geniuses, completely similar in character with, as indicated at the beginning of this scientific treatise, the following persons: Kerensky, Melnik,<sup>3</sup> Bandera,<sup>4</sup> Gegechkori,<sup>5</sup> Dobryansky...<sup>6</sup> It is not prohibited to search for geniuses among people from Krivich, among Kazaks, people of Tula, people from Riazan and so forth. They are all extremely similar to the departed to unknown direction comrades Hitler, Stalin, Lenin and the others.

As you can see, geniuses are necessary exclusively for making us happy, and without them it is impossible to live at the present time.

Nevertheless, we must express certain admonition as a warning for those who would wish to use geniuses from the contemporary leaders and leaders of party and government in exile. The experience of the past years, of the entire history of our century of geniuses, tells that the end of all geniuses happens to be extremely brilliant—today, let us say, genius existed in nature, but tomorrow genius does not exist any more. All of them disappear, so to say, before the appointed time. And their names—as if they fall through the earth. This must be known, because to some of the immigrants, especially to the fans of the geniuses leaders and idols, it is necessary to acquire in advance several idols or geniuses; and for this purpose they need to make a list of them at least in alphabetical order, to whom and when to worship.

However, the names of the old geniuses are eclipsed right away, because the new geniuses immediately overshadow the old ones by their care about humanity. Also it is recommended to publish in all newspapers the birth of new geniuses in order to register them for their turn of disseminating happiness on the earth.

As you can see, genius is a very positive and necessary phenomenon.



## The East Is Aflame

Her costly garment does not conceal her naked ivory-colored fragrant body, any more than does her precious hairpin on her head. Her clothing is no more than an adornment of her candid nudity, it is as transparent as glass. Brightly colored beams of light converge on her, follow her every movement, every pas, disclosing to the very limit of clarity the minutest bends of her beautiful body, showing every detail to the yearning gazes of surrounding onlookers, who are powerless to tear their eyes away from her moving figure.

Surrounded by men, she experiences no embarrassment, she does not feel shame or unease, she displays no feminine modesty – all those prejudices of the past that are still stubbornly surviving in present-day society. Oh, how ridiculous in her opinion are such grandmotherly prejudices in the modern world! And her passionate dancing—now a savage storm, now full of steaming lust, and now of abject lassitude—is not like anything seen till now by the human eyes. Whirling, soaring, cascading, she lures, she calls, she attracts and she promises, “Come to me! I am all yours!”

Her face of rare beauty with delicate and regular features, as well as her low and melodious voice, are tender but restless. Her marvelous sensuous lips are stretching towards the selected victim, they ask, they peremptorily demand a response. Her eyes are burning with the fire of tempestuous passion, they draw one, they excite... and then suddenly their ardor subsides, they lure, they invoke, they promise, “Come to me! I am all yours!”

She came to dance here because it is here that the elite people assemble. There are not so many of them. But they have everything – power, influence, and money. They are rich and highly placed, from generation to generation. They are famous for their past and their present.

Southern blood is hot. Passions boil up instantly. Pairs of sharp, black, inflamed eyes are glued to the young ivory-colored female body. With an unconcealed lust they scrutinize the dancer’s nudity, they are all drawn towards her with one common undisguised desire. They know that she had come here not merely to show her naked body, but to make a gift of it to somebody, a gift for one short moment... Who will be the lucky one? Which one of this select company will be chosen?

Allah is forgotten, forgotten are vows and oaths, forgotten are families, laws and traditions, forgotten are daily cares and worries. Gripped with a passion for the white, northern beauty-dancer, they scream and squeal savagely, and their groan soars over the head of the beautiful young alien, “Aye-aye-aye-aye-ayyay!”

They will come at her call, her promise and would reward her for just a moment of bliss with everything each one of them possesses. But that naked woman with ivory-colored body, with her hair of pure gold, this magnificent beauty, needs only one of them. He has mastery over all the select ones here; he has power the equal of which cannot be found here; he has riches, too, exceeded by no one else here. He may be the oldest of them; he may be the ugliest of all of them; his passion may be as revolting as slime...

But she is luring only him, she is calling only him, she is promising just to him alone, "Come to me! I am all yours!"

Who, then, can resist her? There are not such righteous men in the world!..

The most potent, the most powerful, the richest, the select of the select fell down in his opulent palace, before that woman who had bared her ivory-colored body. She belonged only to him now! And he clung to her beautiful naked legs...

Early in the morning the sun shined on the lovers' bed, "Beautiful of the most beautiful! The most marvelous of the marvelous! The most delightful of the delightful! My most beloved, my most praiseworthy! You deserve my greatest caresses, my passion, my love! You should be one of my most beautiful wives not just in my palace but in my whole country! You deserve the most precious rewards and praise! How can I exalt you? What can I reward you with for your love? How can I praise you to my wives and servants? What honors can I endow you with for the delight of our southern night?.. My riches won't satisfy your cravings, my praises will not raise you to a royal throne! You are worthy of the treasures of the whole earth and the glory of the queen of the world! Tell me, my beloved, what you want from me, and I promise to reward you doubly!

The beauty's fine, slightly wavy golden hair locks spread over the snow-white pillows. The nude ivory-colored body, tired by the sleepless southern night, reposed tranquilly on the colorful soft bed of precious rugs. Neither the precious carpets of intricate workmanship, nor all the promises of the old, ugly potentate, seemed to tempt the danseuse. With eyes full of sadness and sorrow, she looked at her temporary master, the one she had been calling her beloved through the whole night, and she softly, softly spoke with a voice reaching deep into his heart, "I need neither your glory nor your wealth. I need no praise from you, oh my lord and master. I want nothing for myself... Your love is my whole glory, my praise and my wealth!.. I am happy! You have rewarded me with your love, exalted me with it to the heavens! What more can I wish for myself?! I am your property! I do not dare..." And little crystals of tears appeared on her long eyelashes.

"But why, the most beautiful of the world's most beautiful, the most wonderful of the wonderful, why is there such sadness and sorrow in your eyes? Why have silver dewdrops frozen on your golden eyelashes? What, then, is saddening you? What is troubling you? What prevents you smiling with a happy smile? Our southern night was so full of love and delight! And happiness accompanied you till the very dawn! What could suddenly change your life in this instant? Was it memories of the past? Have the far-off northern thoughts brought this sadness to you?"

"My sovereign master! The most powerful of the most powerful! I have traveled all over your country. Poverty and grief was what I saw, misery and misfortune of your wonderful people... I know that your riches cannot enrich your subjects, but I know that with your power you can make their life better, make them happy and bring joy, light, and contentment into every hovel... Just look at your people! They sell their labor for pennies to the alien intruders! For pennies on which they cannot support themselves! Your people labor, day and night, in the sweat of their brows, but they have neither joy nor comfort, nor the time for rest or for love! Stray dogs live better than your people, the most gifted of the gifted people, such that I have not met their like anywhere in the world! Oh, how wonderful your people are! And how unhappy! This is where my sadness comes from, and the silver dewdrops on my golden eyelashes, and my happiness is

darkened with sorrow, oh my beloved sovereign!.. And if you want to reward me, make your people happy! That will please me, and my sorrow will disappear from my eyes, my golden eyelashes will dry up, and I will gift you again with my limitless love and caress!..”

The great potentate pondered. His passion had subsided, and his indifferent gaze, gliding over the nude body of his favorite, met his beloved's eyes... The silvery dewdrops on the golden eyelashes... Sadness in the deep, sky-blue eyes...

“I have promised you... But it is not in my power... I cannot... I do not know how to do it... With you, I am suffering for my people... And my love for you is getting even stronger!.. But, my beloved...”

“My beloved! My great sovereign! I know what troubles you... You are bound to them by the treaties... For that, they pay you a small interest... Insignificant compared to what they should have been paying you!.. Interest from fabulously huge profits! Dissolve the treaties! These are just worthless pieces of paper! Banish the outlanders from your country! Take your riches into your own hands! And then you will create happiness and joy for your subjects...”

“But they have immense powers, my beloved! In their hands are deadly weapons of unequalled potency! My most beloved, their army is invincible! You, the bliss of my life, you, oh woman, you are detached from reality!”

“So, that is what stops you from doing the just thing in your kingdom? Oh, the most powerful of the powerful, oh, my beloved! Let not worry you neither their strength, nor their weapons, nor their armies! You have a great and most mighty friend! That friend will let nobody attack your little country! He is strong, and his strength is feared throughout the world! His weapons are magnificent! His army is invincible!”

“Who, then, is that friend, my most beloved and most beautiful?”

Writhing, the northern beauty embraced tenderly the old and ugly potentate, and in a voice penetrating deep into his soul, she whispered, “The Soviet Union! Be, then, daring and decisive! My people are your people's brothers! We all, men and women, will stand up in defense of your little country! Act! Through your possessions pass the life-channels – the oil pipelines. Destroy them! Declare to the outlanders that all the oil possessions belong from now on only to you, to your people! Declare them to be your property! Order the aliens to leave your beautiful land at once! And tomorrow your people will be limitlessly happy and grateful to you! And the silvery dewdrops on my golden eyelashes will dry up then, and I will smile joyfully to you, and in our life we will gain our new happiness and new joy!”

The mighty potentate thought for long time over the words of his concubine; he thought at length about a decision that would determine the future of his country... And in his eyes, fixed on the naked beauty, on her bare, marvelously feminine body, a decision was growing...

“Let it be as you say, my beloved beauty!..”

And the East was aflame...

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The small red meeting room with its little stage is brightly lit with large electric lamps. On the stage, at the long table covered with a vivid red heavy cloth, the presidium is sitting, which included the most honored participants of today's celebration. Among

them is the best of the outstanding students of the Special Women's School of the MVD,<sup>1</sup> comrade Gurina, the beauty with golden, slightly wavy hair and with an ivory-colored body. In the audience – the school graduates, one more beautiful than the other (vying with each other in striking beauty), and several select guests from the most secret institutions of the capital. Special school will never be mentioned by journalists of "Pravda"<sup>2</sup> or "Izvestia,"<sup>3</sup> even though it is a model school, unequalled by any educational institutions in the Soviet Union. The journalists themselves are not admitted here.

The chairman of this celebratory meeting introduces the speaker, the superintendent of the school, the corpulent major of the State Security, comrade Kotikov.

The obese major rose slowly from the presidium table and, treading heavily over the stage, unhurriedly approached the podium specially erected for this meeting. Taking in with a sharp glance the little hall, in a deep bass he began the long speech.

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Comrades! The ultimate objective of our Party is the world revolution and the building up of Communism in the whole world. We can fulfill this objective only after we destroy the old world, on whose ruins we will be able to erect the new Communist society. But, as the Marxism-Leninism and our dear leader Comrade Stalin teach us, the end of capitalism will not occur all by itself, but only through a revolution, a worldwide revolution. History has imposed on us, on our Party, the task of being the leaders of this revolution. This is why we should not sit with our hands folded and wait until the working class of the capitalist countries takes up arms and begins to destroy the hostile to them social order.

The genius of Comrade Stalin, his profound intellect, his foresight, his gift of great military commander and the leader of the world Communist movement are known to the whole world. The genius of Comrade Stalin has predetermined the victory over Hitler, the genius of Comrade Stalin has also predetermined the expansion of Communism to the East and to the West, leading to the creation of a series of socialist republics in Europe and the Communist China in Asia.

But that does not mean that we are already close to our goal. There is still a long way ahead to the world revolution, still a long way to the worldwide Communism, a goal we must pursue persistently and relentlessly, overcoming all obstacles that may be encountered on our victorious path. We must not forget that the genius of Comrade Stalin predetermines a world revolution in the close future only under the necessary condition that we will assist in hastening the day of its arrival. In bringing closer the time of this revolution, we, in the first place, must take the most active participation.

In the spread of Communism, the leading part is exercised by the Soviet Communist Party, whose members we are. Soviet Communists are gaining one victory after another in the capitalist countries and in the countries that are backward, feudal, semi-primitive. Soviet Communists sometimes sacrifice their lives in the name of the Communism in the whole world, but they know no fear. Just as during the Second World War Soviet people died for Stalin, for the homeland, so now Soviet communists willingly die for Stalin, for the Party.

You, women, members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, dare not

stand apart from that great struggle that our Party is waging not just against the enemies within our country, but against the enemies of Communism around the world. You, women, need not fear for your life, because that field of action in which you will have to work does not require such sacrifices, though it requires on your side special responsibility and special caution in your behavior.

Your work is no less responsible and no less complicated, but it is, under certain conditions, less dangerous. After graduating from our special school, you are now armed with the most up-to-date scientific knowledge, and, as long as you conduct yourselves according to the rules that you have learned, you will always remain invulnerable.

Comrade Stalin personally, the Central Committee of the Party, and our outstanding Internal Affairs Minister Comrade Beria have developed and approved our school's program. The best psychologists, physiologists and biologists, medical and forensic experts, have taken part in the preparation of the specialized program and specialized textbooks in which theory is combined with practice. By strictly adhering to the knowledge acquired in our school, you will be able to execute any mission the Party sends you on, in any non-Communist country. A perfect mastery of foreign languages, knowledge of local dialects will permit you to orient yourselves quickly in unfamiliar surroundings. The Party, acting through consulates, trade delegations, cultural missions and other delegations and institutions, will direct your activity and assign new tasks to you.

The Party does not demand from you your life, but it demands from you your body! Your young, healthy, beautiful body in the name of the World Revolution!

Knowing male psychology, you can do what no other, even the most experienced, agent of ours can do abroad! You have learned perfectly the methods of making a man fall in love with you, and how to fascinate a man. An infatuated scientist or cabinet member, a general or a top executive of some secret enterprise or institution who has lost his head will reveal to you, the innocent objects of his love, such secrets and so easily, that you will be amazed yourselves! Such secrets as we could not obtain in any other way, will fall into our hands with incredible ease!

A course of espionage, a course of sabotage, a course of propaganda of our ideas to the masses, a flirtation course of ability to seduce a man, a course of Communist infiltration in countries of the West and of the East – these are the weapons that you have been armed with and that you have mastered now sufficiently well to help the Party in its struggle against capitalism.

The Party has mobilized you, as Party and Komsomol<sup>4</sup> members, the Party has chosen you as most fit for the work that you will have to perform. You are the best of the best! You are the best looking, the most attractive and the most capable to perform the extremely important secret Party assignments from the Central Committee and personally from Comrade Stalin.

The Party and Comrade Stalin personally demand of you a Bolshevik's persistence in your work, the audacity, the inventiveness, the independence, the ability to come out pure from even the dirtiest circumstances that may be encountered on your path.

You have demonstrated on your examinations your theoretical knowledge, you all have passed with excellent grades the practical tests.

The Central Committee and personally Comrade Stalin could not miss to appreciate the work performed in practical assignment by one of the graduates present here. She is a graduate of your class. Her name is comrade Gurina. The assignment performed by her is such as could have been performed only by a very experienced woman-agent. This is why the Central Committee and Comrade Stalin personally have applied to the Soviet Government a request to reward this graduate with the Order of Lenin. As superintendent of the school, and in the name of all the present employees and students, I congratulate comrade Gurina with the honor she has been awarded.

(Loud applause and exclamations "Long live Comrade Stalin!" and "Hurrah for comrade Gurina!" interrupted the speech of the school superintendent who after a pause continued his speech.)

The Central Committee of the Party and Comrade Stalin personally hope that all of you will follow the example of the award winner comrade Gurina who has performed a heroic deed equal to one performed in a battle. As a result of her work in one of the African countries has occurred a sharp break with the past – not a trace is left from the sympathies for the Anglo-American imperialists who had been very strong there, and the Soviet Union became that country's greatest friend!

The role of the underground Communist Party in that country has increased. It is not underground any more but legal. Our official agents have been directed there in considerable numbers. Together with the cultural, scientific and economic missions, they will instill Communist ideas, revolutionize the masses, especially not very numerous intelligentsia, and the students.

From the newspapers you already know about the disruption of the oil pipeline in that country, about the expropriation of oil wells from the foreigners, about the government's decision to restrict the activity of foreigners in the country, while this restriction does not apply to our representatives. This great work has been performed by comrade Gurina! The Party and Comrade Stalin are sure that you all will follow her example!

Long live Comrade Stalin!

Long live our school, preparing such Party workers as comrade Gurina!

Honor and glory to comrade Gurina!

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Surrounded with honor and fame, comrade Gurina left for a new voyage, to a new country, with new assignments of great importance and great secrecy. For the glory of the Communist Party and Comrade Stalin personally, she had many times yielded her body to avid oriental magnates, extracting benefits not for herself, but for the universal worldwide happiness that was secretly walking with giant steps toward the imminent world revolution. And the current assignment was, so she believed, another significant step bringing mankind closer to the cherished dream.

The magnate with whom she had now to enter an intimate relationship was not as repugnant as some of the preceding ones, on the contrary, he was young, handsome, graceful and easy going. But he was repugnant to her because he belonged to the ruling bourgeois class, and for that reason he did not attract her physically at all. She knew that stifling the revulsion for him, which she called a class feeling, she would still lie with him in his lavishly furnished bedroom on the nuptial bed, and give him unlimited power

over her body, that body which she herself was in love with.

She was sure that by means of that body she would manage to extract from this well-groomed statesman very secret data of first importance about the forthcoming negotiations with the representatives of the Wall Street sharks. She also knew that she would spend many more such nights with him, submitting every day her reports at the cultural mission, located on the main street of the capital, in a gorgeous palace that her country had bought. From there, all the data would be immediately transmitted to the Kremlin, and the most important of it will be passed on at once to Comrade Stalin.

Oh, she knew how careful she must be! Because for this assignment, she might get a second Lenin Order! Therefore, she was fighting back her class-based revulsion towards the handsome oriental man and she tried not to think of the forthcoming nights by entertaining herself in the expensive nightclubs of the great oriental city where she met her agents. There she passed on to them her reports in every detail about the night she had spent, as it was envisaged by the instructions governing such occasions. At the same time she was supplying a complete character assessment of her "lover," on whom, based on her reports, a special dossier was already being composed in Moscow.

Comrade Gurina's superiors were very pleased with her work, gave her some insignificant instructions, posed some additional objectives, and her dream of a new Order seemed to be getting more and more realistic. But this time she dreamed of receiving her Order of Lenin not from the fat school superintendent who was not in her direct line of command any more, but, probably, from Comrade Stalin personally.

Her successes accumulated, her hopes kept growing, but at the same time a dim feeling of a different kind was growing within her towards her class enemy, the handsome magnate, with whom she continued to meet in secluded spots from which he drove her to his palace and then drove her back to the city early in the morning.

Her reports were getting more meager, her data did not always agree with the information her immediate superior received here from other sources. She was gradually being enveloped in an aura of mistrust, of doubt; they began to suspect her of betrayal, even though her "beloved" told her that, at his insistence, the treaty with the until now friendly power had not been signed.

Inspired by this success, she arrived for a meeting with her agent, who stunned her with the news that the chances for the Soviet Union's success in a certain economic, and consequently political, undertaking, had been undermined by an agreement signed the day before at the insistence of her "lover." The agent demanded that she obtain at any cost the copies of these secret documents, and the beautiful spy, having rented a car, rushed out from the city to the palace of her "lover."

On her way she was weighing her situation, which led her to tragic conclusions—the complete failure of her mission was emerging with such clarity that there was no way to ignore it. The results, she knew well, varied in such cases – from a heavy disciplinary punishment while remaining further at service but with severe restrictions, up to a death penalty. Realizing that her failure was bordering on treason, because the agent had hinted to her that they were beginning to suspect her of a real love affair and of a wish to remain in that country, she reckoned that she would be threatened with more than a routine disciplinary penalty, but with some very serious punishment that she could escape only by doing something so big for the Party that doing it would be beyond human capacity.

So what could Gurina attempt now, how could she whitewash herself in the eyes of her superiors? She could not see any way to do it. Even those copies of the secret agreements about which the agent had talked to her, would not restore the lost trust in her and she would have to submit to the full force of the Party discipline in the very institution in which she was working. That boded nothing good for her.

What future, then, did she have? To stay in this country or to move to another – would be impossible. They were already watching her and would find her even at the sea bottom and would destroy her. There remained only two choices – either to obtain through any means the copies of those documents, or to confess about her still uncommitted “crime” to her “lover” and, renouncing all her past, beg him to hide her so well that the long arm of comrade Beria would not reach her.

Meanwhile, her adorer, having deceived Gurina, laughed wildly for a long time after his nighttime favorite had left. He knew very well that she had been sent to him as a secret service agent from a Communist country. Having enjoyed her body and her hot caresses to his satiation, he parted with her without regret, and now, lulled, still intoxicated by his fabulous night, he was stretching indolently on his soft pillows.

The telephone rang out unexpectedly through the awakening fresh morning, and it startled him. He picked up the receiver, and heard the familiar voice of the northern beauty imploring him for another meeting. And his oriental blood boiled with new excitement. The magnate decided to complete his laughter, combining it with sensual pleasure. He made up his mind to spend yet another night with the camellia from the far off North, so that he would long retain a delightful memory of her. One more night, and probably the last one, so that he could tell her, after enjoying her, that he had matched her ruse with his own more than twice.

In the evening, the “beloved” was again carrying her in his speeding Rolls Royce to his country palace. And again the naked comrade Gurina was spread on the luxurious bed, satisfying the passion of her insatiable master. Again, she spoke to him enticingly, trying to penetrate deep into his soul; but her guttural voice sounded differently now, and he could not fail to notice that.

“Oh northern Laisa! I have lied to you! The treaties have been signed yesterday, at my insistence!”

“My beloved! My lord and master!” she exclaimed now with sincerity. “I need nothing! Save me! Just save me, my most precious! Death awaits me now in my country! Save me, I implore you! Not my body only, but my whole life belongs to you alone! My master! I am your slave to the last day of my life!”

“Though your body and your soul appear faultlessly clean, you are too dirty, both in your beautiful body and in your remorseful soul, prostitute sent by the North!” And a wild laughter broke the pre-dawn quiet.

Like a tigress, the insulted beauty sprang from the bed of love and, barely covering her nudity by some precious rag snatched on-the-go, she ran out to the city, to the cultural mission, with the slim hope of earning a reduced punishment with a sincere confession. Oh, how she wanted to live! But the wild deafening laughter kept sounding in her ears, hounding her about the impending trial prosecuting her to death.

Fortunately, the streets were still deserted, quiet and sleepy. She did not meet a single policeman, and, trembling from fear and from the morning chill, she slipped inconspicuously into the building of the Soviet cultural mission...



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A few days later she was standing at attention, with her Order of Lenin, earned long ago, pinned on, before the Minister of the Internal Affairs, and reporting her failure, taking the full responsibility on herself in the straightforward Bolshevik manner. With a dismissive hand movement, the minister pointed to the door, where was standing the executor of the Party's will, the corpulent major Kotikov, the superintendent of the special school, whose personal sadism was very well known to her.

In his peculiar office, equipped for inflicting punishment after getting confessions extracted by force, Gurina opened up—yes, she had acted in collusion with the sharks of Wall Street, and it was she who had led the African magnate to the signing of those secret documents whose content remained unknown to the Kremlin, but which, according to intelligence data, were directed against the Soviet Union, the Communist Party and personally Comrade Stalin.

She confessed further that, on the orders of the same Wall Street sharks, she began preparing an act of terror directed against the Central Committee of the Party and personally Comrade Stalin. All the Central Committee members and personally Comrade Stalin were to be destroyed in the sight of all the people, during the celebration of October Revolution day, on the podium of the Red Square.

Of course, Gurina's crime against the Party and against Comrade Stalin personally was monstrous, and she deserved the highest penalty – to be shot; but the diligent major Kotikov managed, even before the sentencing by the special judicial tribunal dealing exclusively with top secret cases, to settle the account with his former student, who had performed her first practical test in his office, on the wide opulent sofa, giving her body and her caresses to her ugly boss.

Naked and ravaged to the point of being unrecognizable, after the confessions demanded by Kotikov, she was lying in a pool of her blood, and the Order of Lenin, crushed by the boot of the heavy major, was stuck into her mutilated breast.

A trap opened and a powerful stream of water with a roar flooded over the still hot but lifeless body of the beautiful Gurina, washing away her body and her name forever...

## Is It Any of Your Business?

*It was written in tune with the Soviet speeches at the women's conferences.*

Of course, there is no communist party in Hungarian People's Republic, and Matiash Rakoshi has no ties to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and even if some kind of party exists in the Hungarian People's Republic, then please tell me, is it any of your business?

Very well then, let's assume then that there is a Labor Party in the Hungarian People's Republic. Well, this has nothing to do with the Soviet Communist Party. And that the secretary of this party, comrade Matiash Rakoshi, is the Soviet citizen and a member of the Soviet Communist Party, is it any of your business?

In other words, the convention of the Hungarian Labor Party opened recently. Not the communist party. Please remember that carefully—Hungarian People's Democratic Republic Labor Party! So what do you suppose, the party conventions should not be open? Since the conventions are opening everywhere, then the question to ask is, why can't they open the same conventions in the Hungarian Democratic People's Republic. And is there anything surprising about this? Even in England, the comrades from the Labor Party, the party conventions are opening, the talks are given and resolutions are proposed. And you then are not surprised? Therefore, there is no sense in being surprised, that in Hungary opened the convention of Labor Party.

Have you heard that at the convention, comrade Voroshilov had arrived? That is of course, from the Soviet Union. And comrade Voroshilov, of course, as you know, is a member of Communist Party and a member of the Soviet government. So, this comrade arrived in the perfectly assigned time to the convention of the Hungarian Labor Party. And do you continue to be surprised again? And tell me please, is it any of your business? Is it? So, comrade Voroshilov has arrived. So what? Can't he come and visit his own Hungarian Democratic People's Republic?..

Of course, comrade Voroshilov did not come to his Hungarian People's Republic for nothing. He came to address the Hungarian Labor Party convention and deliver a speech. And to his speech the members of the Labor Party were listening with great attention. And the speech of comrade Voroshilov was frequently interrupted by loud and long lasting applause and everyone would stand up and loudly... Well, you know how it goes, don't you?.. Since this has already become a well known tradition of all the conventions of the Hungarian Labor Party...

So, in what language did comrade Voroshilov deliver his speech? In Hungarian? In Russian? If the comrades from the labor party were listening very attentively to the speech of the all-union elder comrade Voroshilov and very often interrupted the speech with loud and long lasting applause, and finished up with long ovations in honor of comrade Voroshilov...

And what business is it to you, my dear reader? So why are you so insistent about all the details? Whether some comrade from the Hungarian labor party understands or

cannot understand – that is not so important, that this member of the party would interrupt the speech in time, what is really important is that he applauded loudly and with never ending ovations greeted his own party lord Voroshilov...

And, in general, dear reader, don't try to get interested in what is going on in the Hungarian labor party, or you will be mistaken for an Anglo-American spy with all the consequences leading to the concentration camp...

"What does this have to do with the Soviet concentration camps?" you might ask.

But is it any of your business about the People's Democratic Republics?

They say that comrade Voroshilov has expressed himself at the conference in a Lugansky's<sup>1</sup> language dialect...

## The Announcer's Voice

How many different sounds are rushing into your room when you turn on the radio set! It is not surprising if you will slightly open the veil and listen to what is going on "there,"<sup>1</sup> what life your Motherland lives...

So here it is a familiar voice. As if you were carried away to the faraway past. You are there. Nothing has changed since that time. Still the same announcer, the same words about pathos, enthusiasm, achievements, over-fulfilling norms, being on watches, plans by the party and the government, which are still dear and wise and the same are taking care of helpless people... All the same as it was five, ten... thirty-six years ago. Lies! No changes! It means the same poverty, hopeless poverty. The same standing in lines, the same spiriting away of peaceful people at night... Everything for the glory of socialism-communism!

Russian language... But how alien it is to the Russian person...

You hear the voices. It seems your mother tongue. But how alien it is to the Russian person.

You are changing wavelengths and enthusiasm changes to language with the foreign accent. Someone is speaking. And now it is not a surprise anymore. In fact in Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Albania, and in Germany—everywhere they learn Russian language, the language of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism... The Great Russian language is transformed in abbreviations with which communism has penetrated our wonderful language... "Pre-rev-war-sov visited cons-camp number 36 and awarded head-cons-pers..." (Pre revolutionary soviet visited construction camp number 36 and awarded head construction personal...)—the language of the turkey-cock substituted for the native speech.

You hear voices—seems like native language. Latvian woman worker speaks about achievements; Lithuanian man worker speaks about over fulfilling plans, Czechoslovakian man about being on the watch, Hungarian about socialist contract, Romanian about his happy life, German woman from East Germany about the party and government's care of her children...

They speak... Speak Russian... Without inspiration, without enthusiasm, with foreign accent... But listen carefully to this Russian speech and your sensitive heart will feel the tears, grief, nostalgia, burden, hopeless poverty, and slavery of socialism-communism. You can feel it from their timbre, tone of voice and diction. The voice is not ours, not native, but the same truth, collective farmers' and workers' truth sounds in the language.

Our speech sounds in the countries of the so-called people's democracies. How much hate people feel for the Russian people, for their language! Why? Only because the Soviets in the name of Russian people execute freedom everywhere they arrive.

When people start to speak Russian, you learn that they are not Moscow's announcers whom one cannot understand whether they live well or not, are they happy with soviet government or not. Announcer is an actor. He is like a clown that must sing,

the area "*Ridi paliaccio...*"<sup>2</sup>

The speech of the announcer has a lot of inspiration, enthusiasm. But we know that it is just an actor's trick, we know that under the gilding are hidden the terrible needs of the Russian people... And this poverty is enveloping the countries of "national democracies..."

No matter how much Moscow's reader-actors would overstrain their voices, they could never over-persuade the people of the free world in anything. Now everybody knows that communism is the gloomy underground in which millions of people suffer. There is no light, there is no freedom... Only poverty and eternal famine... Such is the communism!

## About the American Help to the Russian People

Not only once did the American people try to help the Russian people who were under the yoke of communism. Did this help ever reached the people and in what measure? At the present time this question is of great importance because U.S. President D. Eisenhower is going to attempt once again to provide such help.

Many of us have witnessed the hunger of 1921 in the USSR. The generous hand of the American people gave a hefty donation to our people—this we cannot forget. But now is the time to reveal how communists used this help for their goals.

In those years I lived in the heart of Donbass, in Makeyevka, Yuzovka, Gorlovka, Nikitovka... Coal! Black Gold! The life of the whole country depended on it! But the mines were silent. There was hardly any glimmer of life in them. The factories were silent too. The miners and the industry workers, poor and hungry worked more for themselves than for the new authority, which provided nothing for them. They turned into artisans, handicraftsmen, and petty traders. Many of them cultivated their vegetable gardens in which they grew potatoes, corn, vegetables and some even planted grain in their tiny pieces of land. The majority of people left their familiar nests to search in the wide-Russian-world the better places... Donbass, which once lived the full-blooded life and which was never in need of anything, because it had everything – blossoming agriculture and the richest industry, now was slowly dying of hunger and cold death.

By the summer of 1921 the Donetsk basin represented a terrible picture of hunger, desolation, and devastation. Here and there on the horizon towered tall chimneys, from which the smoke had not risen for a long time, motionless mine towers blackened like skeletons, the mounds of mine tailings were overgrown with green grass which burned out in the sun's heat; and near the factories and mines – dead silence. The steppe was burned out. Only occasionally did the dust, rising upwards in the whirling dust devils, gallop in a column over the hungry plain...

There were rare passersby—gray, gloomy, worried and embittered. Some of them hurried to the market to exchange their remaining wretched stuff or products of their handiworks, like buckets, basins, teapots, troughs, benches, sandals, etc for a piece of barley or corn bread; the others go there aimlessly with little hope of receiving charity... On the markets there are pharmaceutical doses of fats, sugar, thin slices of “bread” from the unknown “cereals.” The vendors do not pursue money, the large bills are but of poor value. Hunger...

Suddenly Donbass came to life, started to talk, became noisy, began to buzz, wheels and machine tools started to spin, the chimneys filled with smoke, and the greenery of the coalmine refuse heaps started to grow dim. Donbass started to breathe. And on the markets the “rich men” were selling, trading the so-called, “Americanka,” and “Canadka” – sugar, butter, and fats...

The communist authority needed to live. The basis of its life was the industry and the government threw the American help not to rescuing the starving but on the restoration of the communist industry! The American help became food for communist

sharks! But it was not the first time that American kindness has served to strengthen communism in the country.

In those previous years I was in the villages of the Donbass: in Stepanovka, Zaitsevo, Alekseyevka, Nizhnyaya Krynka, Zuevka.... The American help hardly got there. It filtered through the factory workers and miners who were already supplied by the Soviet authority so well that all those who had left their houses because of the hunger and also those who never worked there were compelled to go to the industries. But the peasants, in their huge numbers, continued to starve. The food stations organized by the authorities did not provide a minimum nutrition and the death rate in villages was significant.

I had a chance to see some of these food stations in various villages. They were supplied on firm norms, mainly with potatoes. Several country girls, whose lot luckily fell to work for these stations, were healthy, red cheeked, and cheerful. They had breakfast, lunch, and supper that consisted of potatoes. They ate it fried, boiled, and baked. But that potato soup, which they gave out to the starving, did not contain enough starch to at least satisfy the appetites of the unfortunate people...

While in the industrial places people already got enough food and they already had "surpluses" for bartering and "surpluses" for satisfaction of other needs, in the villages at the same time continued terrible hunger.

People were struggling for life. They ate wild orach, wood bark, sawdust, potato peels, but they swelled from not having real bread and died.

It is terrible to recollect those times!

Now, after more than thirty years have passed, I think that it would have been better if the American people did not help during those years the communist authority to establish their power on the Russian soil. Then, maybe, there would not be any communism in the world, and the present days would be more quiet and peaceful. However, maybe, I would not be in this world, because it was not easy for me to survive the hunger either. But there would be Russia!

I do not know the results of the American help in the last war—World War Two—but, knowing the hypocrisy, deception, and cruelty of the communist authority, its wildness and fanaticism, I believe that the second time this help was also used by the communists to strengthen their authority over the Russian people and for distribution of their influence all over the world.

I call upon the readers of newspaper Rossia to tell on its pages about what the American help gave to the Russian people during the Second World War and how it strengthened the communist authority for the second time.

I also hope that our dear Nikolay Pavlovich, as the Editor of the Russian newspaper, will be able, based on our exclusively truthful materials, to write a corresponding letter to the president of the United States Eisenhower, which would help him to make the most rightful decision concerning the prospective help to the USSR.

## Have You Heard?

The trend is, so to speak, toward some very vague conversations. Everyone is talking on the same theme. Everyone is interested in the same question. The perennial one. But, perhaps this is why this very malignant subject, that interests everyone, is unusually timely. If it will not be solved during the time we are living, then it will be difficult to tell upon which parallel to divide the next country at the worldwide peaceful conference. Perhaps, the British one.

Have you heard, the delegation of British Labourists<sup>1</sup> led by Clement Attlee<sup>2</sup> was visiting Red China via USSR?

Have you heard that this highly regarded delegation of the English working class stopped in Moscow?

Have you heard, that the gentlemen labourists had the honor to dine with comrades Malenkov,<sup>3</sup> Khrushchev<sup>4</sup> and other collective leadership figures?

Have you heard, that after a very satisfying dinner, appetizers and drinks, they staged a show for the labourists, entertaining them with different motion-pictures, fables with live actors, and the puppet show at the flat of Moscow “worker”? They put the Metro<sup>5</sup> dust in their eyes, they triple-cursed the capitalists and complimented the labourists, in other words, they showed many and they told even more stories than they showed. They told so much that the gentlemen delegates from Great Britain even expressed their sincere compassion towards the “Russian” government and towards the Russian people in their (!) difficulties!

Have you heard that the gentlemen delegates flew out of the capital of the USSR to the capital of the Red China, the government of which repeated all of the theatrical performance that the Moscow agitation and propaganda of the anti-arts of the small and big theaters, but in the Chinese-communist style. There were dinners, traditional national dishes, mutual invitations. They drank, they snacked, they drank again and snacked again. Afterwards, all the highly regarded delegates toured all of the Red achievements. After drinking so much, everything looked great! Achievements everywhere. The delegates did not pay attention to the prices. How many innocent lives were paid to reach all these achievements—this was something that the delegates did not care to know.

Have you heard that the gentlemen delegates expressed their sincere compassion to all of the Misterys Chu-en-lais<sup>6</sup> and Mao-tse-dongs<sup>7</sup> and also to all Chinese people (?) in their difficulties in building communism?

The Kremlin wealthy men and their Peking followers managed to fool the Englishmen with their Russian and Chinese hospitality, and not only the Englishmen, not only the socialists-labourists who stand close to communism. And it does not surprise us to see the sincere smiles and warm ovations of labourists in Moscow and in Peking.

After eating plenty at Malenkov’s, C. Attlee and his fellow companions could not believe that the ordinary Russian person is going hungry. After eating until they got pink in their eyes, C. Attlee and his companions could not believe the fact that Chinese



people live not any better than the ordinary Russian people.

Have you heard, that Mr. C. Attlee demands to destroy the Nationalist China? The "Laborer" Attlee cannot find a solution for co-existing with Nationalist China! This is so familiar for us Russians. There was a time when they couldn't co-exist with National Russian forces. This was a long time ago, during the times of the Civil War in Russia. But this is not the ancient history either, and Mistery Attlees should remember those times. What are the results of such unwillingness of gentlemen from labour party to co-exist with National Russia? What did it lead to? To the spread of communism. To the great danger for all free humanity...

But we have only one question for Mr. Attlee: "Why is it that the possibly future prime minister, the British government, does not find it possible to co-exist with communism in Malaysia?"

Oh, my well respected gentlemen, look where all these advancements are leading to! People's ability to think is obscuring. And Mr. C. Attlee agrees today to co-exist with the Communist China, because it does not threaten Britain directly, but he refuses to co-exist with Communism in Malaysia and he supports all of the government's actions in the process of fighting the Malay Communists. But Mr. Attlee does not understand one of the basic truths, that tomorrow Communism will open its jaws to swallow the tiny Britain!

Yes, British are terrified of war. Communism is better for them rather than being in war. The leaders of the British labour movement do not understand that Communism will take away not fewer lives than an atomic or hydrogen bomb would. Maybe, even more lives...

## Abundance

So you say that everything that is written in soviet newspapers is a lie, that all that they transmit on the radio is not true, that there are no achievements in the soviet state, that people work harder than ever, that there is not enough food stuffs or industrial goods for the population?! Do you think that anyone would believe your words? Do you really think to dissuade with your words from here those who believe the soviet press? It is not as easy as you think. You do not have enough facts to operate with...

And then, whether you know it, let your Sovietists lie once, let them lie at last one year, But it is impossible to lie every time and every year and during all thirty-six years on end! In fact, liars themselves could not forever bear to lie but some day would blab out!

And let me ask you, how long since you came from Soviet Union? Wha-a-a-t? So, my dearest, you lagged behind from life so much that you are not the one to speak, not the one to over-persuade those who know better than you, who have fresher data! Your reasoning is simply antediluvian! In fact, during your absence in the Soviet Union, there were so many changes that you would not recognize your motherland! Read only how many achievements, how many different successes in all spheres of life. We, you and I together, sitting abroad, cannot even imagine one hundredth part of that which is going on there!

"But," you object, "it was like this all the time in the soviet state."

"You just look what is going on now. You probably heard about over-fulfilling the plan of sowing? And in fact this is owing to September plenum of the communist party!"

"Do not count your chicken before they are hatched!"

"All of it is good, but sowing, does it not occur in the spring and not in the autumn? And the target plan was executed with one-hundred-twenty-three percent! And now you will reassure someone that the agriculture goes on a loss? Khrushchev himself talks about it and his words are confirmed by Malenkov, Mikhoyan<sup>1</sup> confirms Malenkov's words, Mikhoyan's words are confirmed by the Soviet newspapers, which one needs to read from the heading to the last article and signature!"

"But in newspapers we read about successes... And people still have nothing to eat! In fact, crops are not only picked up yet, and the grain is still not sowed everywhere! Also with the industrial goods—the same story as well as with the agriculture products!"

"But you should look how over-fulfilling of production plan goes, how Stakhanovites are exceeding the norms not on one hundred percent but one thousand percents of party and government's works quotas! He-e-y! You are just very tendentiously critical of the soviet government! I am sure that in two-three years, as Comrades Malenkov and Mikhoyan had said, the population of the soviet state would live wonderfully! In fact, if the government will not fulfill its promises..."

"So what will happen? Absolutely nothing! As it existed apart from the Russian people, so it will continue to exist. It will never talk to people, it will never report to them! And there is no need to report because there will be such abundance in the country... from which many thousands of workers and peasants would turn up one's toes!"

"No, you are just malicious! It is impossible to talk to you! You know, abundance will be in the country! Do you understand A-BUN-DANCE!"

"Abundance? But it, this abundance, exists from the very beginning of creation of the soviet communist rule! But what kind of abundance is it? There flourishes the abundance of words, abundance of propaganda, abundance of promises, abundance of instructions, abundance of decrees, abundance of assemblies, abundance of meetings, commissions, subcommittees, congresses, conferences, demonstrations, over-fulfilling on paper of all plans, Stakhanovs movements with Stakhanov's percentages, Krivonosovs movement with Krivonosov's percentages, Izotovs movement with Izotov's percentages of over-fulfilling plans; and as a result of all of this abundance, the population goes hungry and cold, it spends hours queuing for bread, shoes and manufactured goods... There is abundance of lies—this is what is abundant in the country of the victorious conquering socialism! Without lies the victory of socialism would have been impossible and its existence also would be impossible without lies!

## The Day

Days can be varied. There are lots of them. Only one year has three-hundred-sixty-five of them but if it is Stakhanov's<sup>1</sup> year, it has three-hundred-sixty-six days. So, how the worker can live out through all of them? How it will happen? One can tire before the year ends!

For the wise communist government, on any new day there is new trouble to take care of working people, but for collective farmer and worker—it's like water off the duck's back!—just sweat on the job and get the wages. Well, the only thing, do not ask about food. Because, it does not belong in any way to the Stakhanov's methods of work. During all the revolutionary years, we have never heard that Stakhanovites were talking something about dinners and suppers, or about clothing. They were simply dying silently.

There are no such days in the world like the soviet days. Now someone is shouting, "Congratulations with happy day, dear!" And we hear these words here abroad. And what is over there?

"With day? With happy one?"

"How come? Didn't you hear? With the day of Seventh of May!"

"Seventh of May? What kind of news is this?"

"Do you live in the last century, do you? In the Esesera<sup>2</sup> there are so many happy days, so many joyous days..."

"New judicial process?"

"What kind of a people are nowadays!.. Slow-witted..."

"You, citizen, explain plainly...Explain all happy circumstances."

"So, well. We can explain plainly if you understand nothing without plain explanation."

"Well, be business-like, gentleman..."

"And you be more attentive, because the wrong information can presented in the newspapers and lead the immigrants into some errors. And it is not really good to operate with the wrong data... Yet, so to say, they can punish, as for incorrect enlightening of completely historical facts..."

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So, we are sitting at home in the evening. As a matter of fact, it was almost night. Because it arrived, so to say, in real earnest. I mean the night. My spouse was in bed already. And I am by the receiver. Of course, radio receiver. Standing. Because our radio receiver is located very high on the fireplace mantel. And I, hence, am standing by the radio because, as you know, I am a short man. And, sincerely speaking, I am listening to the other side of the world. I hear 'native' voice. And my spouse hears it, too. Therefore, both of us are hearing. We listen very attentively. In order, so to say, as witnesses were present at recognition of all the achievements in the Marxist planned thriftless economy.

So, we are listening, my spouse and I. Because the data can be very valuable, extremely detailed and important, something like the note to Australian government,

that stole the lawfully married Petrovs couple...

Well, we listen to the various successes, achievements... They announced some kind of decree about death penalty for murders... And who would pay attention to it in Esesera after thirty-six murderous years? Everyone knows that in this 'happy' Esesera they killed before the decrees, during the decrees, and they would kill after the decrees. And about that happy day, about the seventh of May...

That's the Radio Day!

Well, sure, we know that it is the Radio Day! But what it costs to the working people?! Moscow announcers told us that at the Leningrad radio-factory all workers over-fulfilled the norms so much, so much... Probably, they hardly crawled home after it... They made so many radio sets that the entire world could be bespattered! Because in such 'happy' days, the workers always exceed the norms! That's what soviet holidays are! That's how the soviet 'days' are increasing the productivity of work! Everything according to Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism-collective leadership-ism! Nowhere to sap! For someone the holiday is idleness but over there, "One more and one more time! Yo-ho!"

Even we started to sweat... Because we know how they are, these holidays. Our skin hardly stood up to all of those 'days.'

First of May—a parade and raise vigilance and productivity; The Day of Press—raise the norm of productivity; The Day of Radio—raise productivity of work; The Day Of Railway, The Day of the Soviet Army, The day of Il'ich's (Lenin's) Death, The Day of Joseph's (Stalin) Death. The Day of Bloody Sunday, The Day of Aviation, The Day of Tanks Man, The Day of... And every time there is a need to show Stakhanov's performance standards. Tell me, where the soviet people could get such quantity of sweat to withstand all of this music?

So we reflected. And, respected gentlemen, we thought what would happen if one could arrange in the Esesera "The Day of Bread," "The Day of Potatoes," "The Day of Carrots," "The Day of Pants," The day of Shoes," "The Day of... and send all this Kremlin's word-roaming collective leadership to raise performance standards in order that every worker had bread, potatoes, carrots, pants, footwear and...

In general, in order that the working people would raise their human's life level without standing and waiting for everything in unending line! It would be great fun! Wouldn't it? Then each "Day" would be joyful to everyone! And working people could admire how these proletarians, Kaganovichs, Mikoyans, Molotovs, Khrushchevs, Malenkovs<sup>3</sup> would raise, according to Stakhanov's watch, their own plans which they contrive in Kremlin! Only they probably would become close to starvation... This collective leadership is good for nothing... They can be leaders over the potato at the table, but if you would send them to the fields... They are all freeloaders. They would not be capable to do something even at the dump. There is only one road for them—to the crematorium!

Well, zealous caretakers of the proletariat, get ready for a very long road!

## The Changes

Znaykin and Neznaykin are comrades. Doubly. On the one hand it's because in this state everybody's a comrade, save the "enemies of the people", on the other hand it's because they are friends from the time of early childhood.

They live, it is true, in different parts of the city—comrade Afinogen Afinogenovich Znaykin lives on Stalin Avenue, whereas comrade Agafon Agafonovich Neznaykin lives on Leninsky Lane. They also labor in different institutions. Afinogen Afinogenovich is in a certain very cheerful, merry establishment – he either works in the Registry Office of Births and Marriages, or sells tickets at the puppet theater, whereas Agafon Agafonovich triumphantly reigns at a funeral office getting orders for coffins.

Comrade Znaykin is small, mobile, merry and what's most important—he knows what was, what is, what will be and what will not be. Comrade Neznaykin is tall, sluggish, gloomy and what's most important – he absolutely never knows anything.

The friends get together on every Sunday on the corner of Stalin Avenue and Leninsky Lane always at the very same time. Znaykin is running like mad for a newspaper at the kiosk while Neznaykin, head lowered, is plodding along in line for bread.

"Hey! Agafosha!" exclaims Znaykin, having caught sight of his friend from afar and is preparing to tell him some piece of news, "Alive? Doing well?"

"I am so far, thank God," Neznaykin answers in a singsong voice while making the sign of the cross under his little old, black coat so that standers by would not notice, "It's just that the wife won't let me live... I thought to rest... That's only natural... And legal... You know, it is the seventh day... Then, there you are, go in the bread line..."

This is how their get-togethers always began. That is how it began this time too. But Comrade Znaykin knew something. And this something was super-extraordinary. Afinogen Afinogenovich did not let his friend get through his complaint at his dearest half. He leaned over to Agafon Agafonovich as if by chance and whispered, "It's about Stalin, he's..." then, having jumped back a step from his friend, he looked at him as if to inquire, "And? What? Struck dumb?"

But this news did not strike Neznaykin, although he slowly raised his ever lowered head, his level eyebrows turned into arches, and thick wrinkles covered his forehead. At his funeral office he had grown used to people dying and now all he thought was, "Some lucky devil in Moscow will get the order for the coffin!"

The folds on his forehead and his arched eyebrows were activated by a completely different reason. Agafon Agafonovich, having taken a step toward his friend, asked him in a whisper, "Was he allowed to pass away in private?"

"I'm looking into it," Afinogen Afinogenovich pronounced loudly, fearing to put his foot into his mouth and be trapped by talking about the 'genius.'

"Changes are being foreseen?" in a same whisper asked Neznaykin.

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, Agafosha, now I'm not living any more on the Stalin Avenue but on Malenkov<sup>1</sup> Avenue, my older daughter, Mashen'ka, now is working at Malenkov

factory, my younger daughter, Klavochka, is going to Malenkov school, my son on the job got at Malenkov shift; my neighbor in the apartment to the right suddenly left for Malenkovsk, and the neighbor to the left – to Malenkovograd, the neighbor above took a business trip to Malenkovo, and the neighbor below to Malenkovogorsk; Marie Vanna got a letter from her niece in Malenkovsky region, and the grandson of Stepan Stepanovich is working at the collective farm in the name of Malenkov; my cousin's nephew left this morning on the Malenkovsky Railroad for Malenkov Station en route to the nearby cattle breeding state farm in the name of Malenkov in order to organize the mating campaign in the name of Malenkov, the train is pulled by the steam engine M.G. (Malenkov Georgiy); and rumors are circulating stubbornly that your funeral office will also carry the name of our dear leader, Comrade Malenkov. Of course, of course, there are very many changes! Even in my own apartment instead of Stalin's portrait now hangs Malenkov himself... I advise you also... Because, you see, statues of Stalin... true, they have not yet been removed... the legend is still fresh, but... you must understand and, so to say, watch out for yourself... People that are really in the know say that there have been made numerous orders for portraits and statues of Comrade Malenkov... A monument of Ural granite is being carved out by special order from the Kremlin. It will be taller than the monument to Stalin... In general now we are totally headed hard down on Malenkovsky way!..."

"And are some changes being foreseen?" In a whisper asked Agafon Agafonovich again.

"What are you, Agafosha, a foreigner or something? Don't you see how many changes have taken place all at once, our entire lives are becoming the life in the name of Malenkov, and you're still looking for something else?..

## Ingenious Project

*"The soviet scientific doctor P. Demikov from the Moscow surgical institute declared that a two-headed dog which he created lived only six days after the operation but he hopes that he will create more durable one."  
– Newspaper, "Rossia" No 5513*

Here we are, talking about collective leadership. In one separately taken country. Where, so to say, is being built-fallen and fallen-built the majestic building—of socialism, of course.

Well, there exists this so-called collective leadership.<sup>1</sup> The fact, as they say, visible on the face. Better to say on the faces—blasphemous, criminal, base. And we cannot deny that fact in any way, because being determines one's consciousness. It defines also baseness of collective leadership, its criminality and its blasphemous existence.

And it exists according to all rules of the modern socialist science and technology. And if we have to take a look at this collective leadership from different sides, so to say, it is collective. As they say, wherever you look, everywhere there is a defect. True, not too big, but still a defect. One can say small, even Malenkovsky's defect. Meaning very, very small. Barely noticeable. Because, is it really a big defect, the inability of the collective leadership to lead? Of course not!

Though this defect is very, very small, Malenkovsky's, so to say, but nevertheless, it is perceptible. That's why they are pushing hard on growing corn now. And collective leadership itself submitted for consideration a declaration to the Supreme Soviet that they are such wise leaders, well, how to say it to you clearly... Like leadership does not have enough experience. That is why, so to say, they started to grow corn. They sow it everywhere for the current year. They say that even on the Red Square a special place for growing corn was allocated. In front of the collective mausoleum.

But, my dears, this is just the official part. Where there is unity and firmness. And so on. But behind the side scenes the matter is a little different. With defects, of course. That is why behind those ancillary scenes is the unity of contrasts. It is all clear by the law of dialectic. Let us say that for comrade Malenkov it is desirable to develop his wide needs, because he lives in his own house on Pomerantseva Street, not far from the new socialist skyscraper that belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As for proletarian Nikitka (Khrushchev), he needs world revolution and he spits on any kind of wide need.

Here on that strictly Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ground, not that there were any kinds of disagreements, no, because the party is monolithic, but there was... How to say this expressively... The struggle? No, not the struggle. What kind of a struggle can there be when one has in his hands not only a revolver, but even hydrogen bomb, and the other, one can say, has just an unarmed criminal investigator... In a word, it turns out that it is a collective defect. That is why everyone is sitting not on the needles but, it is possible to say, on the razors' edges. By the way, these razors are adjusted to those who sit on their edges. So, it could be said, that one can not sit on them for a long time.



Because one certain collective-wise place can turn into a cutlet. And, it would be confusing if the cutlet formed from the wise collective leadership.

So, in this potential collective cutlet some individuality exists. Completely individual... And it is named for now as comrade "X." Do not think, my very respectable reader, that is implied general comrade Khrushchev himself. Or General's... Because, the people in the authority of collective leadership have generals' and marshals' grades.

Here this comrade "X" could be read as "Ex" for now. He moves uprightly all the time along the general line. Neither to the left nor to the right of it. Neither to the biases nor to the bends. He moves in an orthodox manner. And once he moves in orthodox manner, hence, he sees clearly that the defect exists today. And he understands that it is necessary to remove this defect. Because, the dictatorship of the proletariat with the collective leadership produces Malenkovsky's defects. And on corn the building of communism cannot absolutely be completed.

As far as comrade "Ex" sees the defect, he decides to combine, so to say, dictatorship with the collective leadership. He even put together the ingenious project. How to bring into reality and combine in one person, in one wise comrade, the collective leadership. And he already makes along medical line a few biological experiments. Not personally, of course, but under the unrelenting supervision. And it needs to be recognized that he has positive results. Certainly, for now only on dogs.

Thus for now only two-headed leadership could be possible. Short-lived, truly, because one dog by nickname Beria, could not stand the experiment, but this technique during the period of reconstruction could solve everything. So, it is possible to say, we are on the eve of the greatest socialist discovery. One dog will have several heads. The collective dog, so to say, will appear in the communist world. And it will have several heads. Let us say, one of comrade "Ex's" head, and one of Kaganovich's, and one of Khrushchev's, and for sure, one of Molotov's and Bulganin's, and other secondary collective comrades. In a word, it will be a communist masterpiece.

By the way, the stick is being prepared for such a collective dog. A good stick. Made from oak. In order to do it with one stroke!

## Marvelous Vision

I have read a lot, you know, respected readers. And I had heard plenty near the radio set, too. And thus I had read so much and had heard so much, that my imagination began to play, and it played, and carried me away, it carried me there, and there... It carries me, therefore, and carries, and I no longer dream, but think. Because, it is known to me as a fact, that I could not dream much over there. What kind of dreams can be, if you immediately will be considered as the people's democracy enemy? And what they do with such person – all of this is also known to us. Therefore, anyone who betrayed the collective leadership must be liquidated! Is it clear? But why he must be liquidated? Because, over there is a democracy. And it is not simple, so to say, not just an ordinary, but a people's democracy. Wow!

Well, therefore, I am flying and meanwhile I have already prepared for everything in a people's-democratic way. I only regret that I did not go to a confession before my trip. That is why, I think, that everything is finished for me. As soon as I will land on that most democratic land, there will be gloom-darkness of hell.

Briefly speaking, I was flying and flying until I did not arrive normally to that self-same people's-democracy. As soon as I arrived, I felt frightened. Because I landed directly on the Red Square. And it is known that sitting on the Red Square is punishable. Because across it, there is the very genuine Kremlin. And in the Kremlin there are real most democratic people's-democracy democrats.

So, therefore, I sat down on the square and continue sitting. I'm looking around. Militiamen, of course, are standing—as it was before, on their places. I had an assumption that they immediately will grab and drag me where they should. Because democracy, here in the center, is the most democratic. In other words, people's-democracy.

It is permitted for the irresponsible element to do whatever they want. And for militiamen, too. But no—no one comes to me and no one grabs me. Hence, it turns out that democratic freedom is here. It means do all what your soul desires. All. But maybe not all? Maybe just those things which are not visible to the collective leadership? For example, for a worker to sleep during night time. To be present on the meetings. To vote on the elections for indestructible block. To work as a Stakhanovite at the factories and on the fields of the collective and state farms?..

I sat on this Red square for a while, dreamed a little about people's-democratic democracy and was convinced that militiamen do not care about me. Therefore, decided to make a trip around my native places. Because how many of postwar years I wasted my health abroad! Therefore, I wanted to see how the life of the peaceful soviet citizens is going on. Because I read and personally heard that in two-three years, no one will recognize people's-democratic country because of all sorts of abundances. Is it not interesting not to recognize your own country from abundances? Is it not? So I went to walk around Moscow. To look at it. So to say, to learn is it Moscow or not?

Well, I walked about our present-day capital. I visited Arbat, Sukharyevka,

Vorobyevy Gory. In one word, I was everywhere. And I saw. A lot of abundances. Even plenty. Therefore, I decided to go to the periphery. To check on outlying districts. Maybe no abundances exist there. I proceeded to the station Moscow-Kursk to buy a ticket. Because in people's-democratic country people do not ride without tickets.

Well, it is known there is abundance here, too. Crowds of people are coming here. And all of them to buy tickets. It is turning out that it is necessary for them to travel. One needs to go to the virgin soil, another one to the building of canal, third one to labor force reserves. In one word, there is also abundance here. Abundance of people. After one week I was able to get a ticket from a well-connected scalper. So I went.

At last, here is the periphery. So to say, worker-collective farm place. Because to the right there is a collective farm and to the left there is some industry. Of course, it is people's-democratic industry. And here are abundances, too. Because those two-three years have already passed. New years started. Only the collective leadership made an amendment. Not really amendment, but it is as if they made a new decision—in connection with conflict in the Far East—to push in the heavy industry. It means to supply the Chinese with all kinds of equipment for realization of happy and prosperous life there. It is because of Anglo-American imperialists etc... You know yourselves, respectable ladies and gentlemen, about it.

Here I am walking as if I have a day off. Cerabkops— Central Worker's Cooperative shops—do not exist there anymore. Everything holds on the Gastronom—grocery and provision shops. It is more capable. Commercial calculation confirms it. Also the state trade prospers. With might and main! Shelves, shelves and shelves in the shops! Plenty! And sales women are there. And the show windows, too. And there is abundance by the entrance door! People are standing as a wall. There is no way to get through! Clearly, I am interested why the happy people are resting in the fresh air. One prosperous man said secretly that they would "give" manufacture. And they brought about five pairs of pants for fifty thousand inhabitants.

It is clear that there is abundance. They are yelling! Swearing, recollecting your father and mother. Of course, militiamen are also present here. They are listening quietly. Because there are no signs of infringement of the community life rule on anyone's face. Also, the line is rather long. And no one from front runs to the back. Because they say that shop will be opened soon. And the line itself, with abundance—it is long, three blocks. In one word, everything is extremely people's-democratic here.

Well, then. Because everything is interesting for me. How it is to live here after post war years. Especially, after two-three years. So thus, with the abundance. And what did you think? I found abundances. There was a shop standing away from noisy streets. So modest. Only in a small show window is abundance. Abundance of goods. And how many different kinds of goods! And for eating, and for dressing and for footwear!

This people's-democratic trade institution interested me. I am entering. Just through the door and a man appeared in front of me. Dressed in a common suit. He asks questions. The people's-democratic one, "Do you, citizen, have a pass?" he says.

"What pass?" I am asking.

"The usual," he says. "The red one that is given to the registered buyers and signed by the chief of MGB!"

In one word, I apologized and quickly jumped out, as if I was stung, of small people's-democratic shop. Because I certainly did not have such pass. Without it they

could consider me to be a spy in favor of some capitalist country. That is also known to us. But I should tell you that I saw enough there! Oh! There was abundance! And no one wanted to buy anything because I did not notice any buyers. And I will report to you that there was a real abundance there! So comrade Malenkov was right. And Khrushchev, too. After two to three years, so to say, MGB workers live in full abundance. I can testify on accuracy. Because I saw this vision personally, up to the end! There were vacuum cleaners, children's toys, manufactured goods, butter and potatoes, bread, and whatever your non-party soul wishes! So here is the abundance for you! And I, with my sinful idea, did not believe collective leadership...

And concerning the worker's-collective farmer's shops—the abundances are there, too. Two to three blocks of long lines are lining up starting from early in the morning and people are standing there in uncertain expectation until next morning—maybe they will “give”—the soviet word meaning that maybe something could arrive in limited quantity for sale to the general public.

And what did you think? Is it possible in two-three years to satiate everyone? Did you? Let them at least stand in abundance and gossip for a while!

I safely regained consciousness from my imagination. I visited, so to say, based on documentary data, the native land. I am convinced now. Of what?

That I did not observe any changes on thirty-eighth year of wonderful happy life! Unless only now there are nuclear and hydrogen bombs and shells. And it is possible to say that the rest has stayed without any changes. Well, but I did not notice the power station. Really, did not notice. Maybe, when I fly there the second time, I will try to notice everything.

## Rewards

Such things are happening nowadays—rewards. To mention the harmless one. And why is that? Only because the people became now ambitious—they strive to snap up some medal or order now. As for the person who so snaps, he says farewell to the Soviet authority and Communist party because for the hero the ways should be open now, every working and non-working day, to the offices, bureaus and other official places!

And what did you think, that the person who informed against his fellow does it for gratis? Do you think he should be content only with gold medal or some kind of order? No dears, it is necessary to understand that all such people's needs immediately grow up to such measure that they cannot be satisfied in the communist world!

So then what to do with such a specimen? How to satisfy his growing needs? Eh?..

And here the proletarian government and dear communist party face such contradiction, which can arise solely from capitalist remnants in the consciousness of happy soviet mankind. Then what to do? How to deal with such a not-quite-ripened human element of the soviet society?

Of course, it is possible to remove such person. But then where to find such perception, enthusiasm, and voting for soviet government and communist party? Who then will be so assiduously supporting the wise collective leadership?

Yes... How much trouble there is with these medal and order bearers... Moreover, everyone strives to have his bronze bust memorial placed in his native place as a reminder to all relatives, friends, and the rest of the population...

Yes... How much trouble with these medal and order bearers... You probably remember that woman doctor, an order-holder. She had a very responsible order. She was wearing Lenin on her breast. And she earned it quite fairly. She informed against and wrecked someone about whom the party leadership demanded information at that time and she got the order. Then suddenly everything changed. General line turned in other direction. Better to say, turned over. And when it turned over, it became necessary to review all doctor-wrecker affairs. After reviewing, they had to degrade woman comrade doctor, because now this entire story did not correspond to the newest general direction...

Taking back orders and medals is practiced in Esesera—that's how people pronounced disparagingly the USSR. Also it is impossible to say that it was a rarity, therefore, the rewarded people could become the "people's enemies" more often than common mortal citizens. And "the people's enemies," it is clear, are lowering the value of the orders.

That is why dear government, together with the wise party, hit upon an idea of awarding orders and medals to absolutely inanimate objects. These, supposedly, "will never let us down!" So, on May 17 of this year they awarded Kronstadt fortress with the order of Red Banner for being in existence two-hundred-fifty-years, for being

constructed by the Tsar Peter Alekseyevich The Great, for the 1921 Kronstadt seamen rising in rebellion against the Soviet communist authority... And what you think? If one had to talk about merits, so it is necessary to list all of them! It is impossible to miss the Kronstadt revolt!

And how the Bolsheviks praise our Tsar Peter Alekseyevich. That's the same sovereign whom not so long ago they proclaimed as a monster of cruelty toward the Russian people! Now, as you can see, to what station they have they arrived!..

However, about the rewards... It is easier for the soviet government and communist party—to award some fortress, collective farm, state farm, or some factory, at least they will not turn into “enemies of the people!” They should have done it long ago! And for people it would have been easier to live. Because, some workers are nauseated with the communist's trinkets! Honest workers, of course...

## Hartford

A double entendre sketch about riddles in Russian orthography

Once, Nikita Khrushchev ruled over the Sovsepia.<sup>1</sup> He, as well as Stalin, certainly was a coryphaeus. A coryphaeus of what? Of everything—corn, virgin soils, consolidation and breaking up, centralization and decentralization. And of course of grammar as well, because he was very wise. In fact, not without a reason did he, as a genius, elevate right away from the Rabfac<sup>2</sup> to the Political Academy! For this he had to be an ingenious genius!

Upon un-finishing the political academy he needed a wide range of activities, because he was certainly a genius activist. Especially when, after the death of the father of all the people, he became the chieftain of a gang of robbers. The energy in him boiled so much that it overflowed and part of it spilled over the Soviet language. The after-revolutionary orthography suffered from the obvious deficiency. Nevertheless, it was necessary to write correctly. But how?

There are too many rules. Too many letters. And most importantly, from the political point of view, the orthography was not good at all! And it came to the mind of the genius-coryphaeus to make short work of the backwardness of the Soviet language, to adjust it, so to say, to the general party line.

Vowels – *glasnye*!<sup>3</sup> Vocal former members of the city дума! Isn't it counterrevolutionary? And most importantly they exist openly! Where is the vigilance of revolutionary organs such as CheKa, GPU, NKVD, MGB, KGB<sup>4</sup> and so forth. By the way, have you noticed, there is not a single vowel in their acronyms? They are all consonants. Do vowels really have the right to break the revolutionary legitimacy? Send them to the place where Makar never took his sheep! Show them who's the boss! Everyone knows that ZK KPCC—Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—recognizes only and exclusively the consonants – *soglasnye*<sup>5</sup> – those who agree! As to those who disagree—*nye soglasnye*—with the leading party organizations and who openly declare it—they should be eliminated, destroyed! Isn't it clear even to babies who instead of pacifiers suck party membership cards, that it is possible to build “cmmnsm” only with the consonants – *soglasnye*?

As it is customary, committees and subcommittees were created, in which scientists, grounded in the forge of marxism-leninism, began to exterminate the vowels – *glasnye*. Science academies, universities, all communist organs—Communist Party, Communist Youth League, Pioneers, October Children—and of professional and sport organizations began to function. And the consonants – *soglasnye* – were put to use—but the vowels – *glasnye* – at best, were sent to exile. And at worst—should we talk about it?

Simplify the orthography! Remove all enemies of the Central Committee—such was the slogan of the coryphaeus of all times and all nations.

Well, in fact it is so simple and easy to say: ZK KPSS, the SSSR, RSFSR, KSM, NKT

KHRSHCHV! Not a single mistake! Hurray! Long live!..

Suddenly Nkt Khshchv died. Very simply—he died. He had a stroke. Brzhnv had struck him. All the committees became silent. Whether they exist now or not—there is silence. Only the vowels—*glasnye*—still get in the way until now... It is true, some of them were sent to madhouses, some were sent to the far end of the country, some were sent to see their ancestors, but statistics do not reveal how many were eliminated. All-Union census was not done yet.

A new coryphaeus appeared—Brzhnv.

It was a political twist! It is not that important that the communist cannot deal with the vowels, there are institutions and professors to deal with that. It is important that the party member be politically conscious and knows where he needs to report about the *glasnye*!

Well, that's about over there. And what about here?

Here, of course, there is nobody to give directives. There are no geniuses in our immigrants' world. There are no committees and subcommittees. It is true that we use not the old, pre-revolutionary orthography but the post-revolutionary, which nobody still dares to change.

Hamburg, Halifax, Heidelberg... Hitler, Hamlet, Havre, Hugo...

Did the post-revolutionary orthography change the spelling of the foreign words that begin with the Latin letter H? No.

How did we spell them before the revolution?

The Chudinov's dictionary of 1894 says: "The letter G... In the Russian alphabet this letter does represent two sounds 'g' and 'h'."

And here from a well known to all of us book of problems in arithmetic by Malinin and Burenin of year 1882: "Problem # 2793: A French merchant... transfers the money through Petersburg, Hamburg..."

In Pavlenkov's dictionary (5th edition) we find: "Hague, Harford, Hamburg, Halifax, Heidelberg, ...even the French city of Havre, French writer Hugo (as it is known, H in French is not pronounced), and etc.—are all written with the letter H.

You can very often find in the immigrant press, to put it mildly, misspellings that have to do with this unfortunate letter, but we still should not become like the "coryphaeus" Nkt Khshschv and we will keep the Russian orthography the same, just as it was accepted in Russia.

Mikhailov, near Hartford.



## Nikitka's Dream

*...80-90 poods<sup>1</sup> of grain were collected from each hectare of the virgin soil...*

– “Poslednie Izvestiya” Radio Moscow.

*...Soviet scientists work on the problem of interplanetary communication...*

– From Soviet newspapers.

Nikitka saw a dream. It was not like a dream of an ordinary citizen. It was a political-scientific dream. As though the interplanetary communication functioned without interruptions. Of course, communication was between the country of the victorious socialism, i.e. the happiest country in the world, and some other proletarian planets.

Well, the communication is functioning without interruptions at full force, but in the happiest country there are many interruptions with bread. So many interruptions that, to some degree becomes almost famine-stricken. And this famine reaches such a degree that the productivity of labor of the leading socialist industry starts falling catastrophically. Even though, mentioning this by the way, all the little percentages of the over-fulfillment of the production orders from the beloved Party and the extremely precious government are without fail claimed to be on the rise.

So this is probably by the law of unity of opposites. Stated in everyday words, the little statistic percentages are rising and rising, but the food-related problem is not good. It is far from being simply not good. Confidentially speaking, it is possible to say that it is not good at all! That is why in an absolutely secret manner some detrimental information started to trickle down from Kruglov's channels. Of course, it did not turn into rebellion of the collective farm-proletarian element because the troops of the Ministry of National Security are guarding, so to say, the revolutionary achievements, in their full fighting order, but still some troubles with the backward element could happen.

After all his daily unrighteous labors Nikitka finally went to bed. And, well, he hit the sack. And the dream progresses in its due course. Because it did appear instantly in his wise head.

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Nikitka sees himself in his own office, not in his bed. He is sitting as usual without assistance, and behind the doors – guarding apparatus. Also guarding the revolutionary achievements. It is there to ensure that Nikitka would not be devoured by the enemies of the people. So during this productive sitting an idea comes to Nikitka's head. It comes very rarely to him, but at that moment it sort of dawned on him. He tapped into some production opportunity—to feed the working proletarian-collective farm hands; well, not exactly hands but rather mouths. It is a well-known fact that it is not the hands that do the eating but the mouths, so to speak.

So Nikitka decided to send out an expedition into the interplanetary space—about the bread. So, it means, to satisfy the appetites of the fattened worker-peasant inhabitants of his own country.

Of course, as he decided, he calls in a member of the Academy of Sciences. He calls and tells him, "Well then, you, comrade academician, need to be closer to the real life! You should not wear out that chair seat in your academician office! Why don't you, brother, fly the hell to some planet, like Saturn or Jupiter, and do your best about the bread. Because in our country of happy and prosperous life there is, well... There are many different abundances, that is... Meaning, that is... Well, only the sharks from the Wall Street, that is..."<sup>2</sup> They have swallowed all our grain reserves, that is... And our people are hungry, that is... In one word, go and fly!"

"It is known," comrade academician replies, "it does not suit us to go against our dear Soviet authority and our beloved Communist party, because we live in freedom..."

"The only thing," adds Nikitka, "I will assign you some escort so that you won't try to run away with some kind of Venus, because you, the members of intelligentsia, can, that is... In a word, just like other Soviet citizens... Because, and it is important to say, you don't understand your own happiness... So then, I will give you a comrade from Kruglov's guard for help... Go on, brother! And, that is to say, don't you dare to return without bread! If you don't find it, start looking for a Kolyma on Venus or a Vorkuta<sup>3</sup> on Saturn, but don't even think about coming back!"

The comrade academician said his good-byes and hit the trail.

So the comrade academician and his companion in misfortune from the Kruglov's guard boarded a special contrivance, loaded the interplanetary rocket, fired a shot from it and took off from the Earth, it went up and up—only a column of smoke remained! So now it flies, pecked at by some interplanetary bodies, like different meteors and so on, but it still flies up because the technology—the most advanced in the world!

The moon flew past the little window. The comrade from the Kruglov's guard asks, distorting pronunciation of word planet, "Maybe this is the "planed"?"

"This is the Moon, comrade. We need to go a little further."

"Make it snappy... Because I need to go..."

"You'll go at the stop, comrade..."

"I am nauseated, comrade academician... Or have you become a saboteur? You, the people's enemy, tell me immediately, or I'll exterminate you!"

"My dear esteemed comrade, it's just because you are not used to it... Just be patient for a while... There is no sabotage of any kind... Because the rocking in interplanetary space is a little bit rougher than in the Fatherland... That's why you are feeling some unpleasantness... That's, so to say, from not being used to... Be patient, comrade..."

"What? Be patient?" cried out the comrade from the Kruglov's guard, "I am not some kind of a working class or a peasant to you! Turn around... you!.." and he added a nonprintable obscene exclamation.

"I cannot do that, my dear comrade, because this is the assignment from the Party and the government... On the personal order of comrade..."

"Just go quicker so that the next stop comes sooner because I am getting worse!"

"I cannot, because our technology is a bit behind the capitalist one, it means that we don't have the speed to surpass them..."

In other words, the pleasant conversation flowed between the comrade

academician and the comrade from the Kruglov's guard. And it flowed as long as they flew during their unfortunate business trip.

But finally the happy day arrived. Our comrades got to Mars. They got out, looked at its canals, mountains, lakes and seas, at the valleys and rivers, and decided that the socialism here had been built long time ago—it was completed, so to speak—because there were not people there but only shadows. Now then, would you just try, dear and highly respected citizens, to dig such canals! And the seas! And the lakes! And what kinds of mountains have they built!.. But the problem of nutrition, it seems, is also very bad here. The happy Martian people are browsing bark off the remaining trees! So the comrade academician and the comrade from the Kruglov's guard decided to fly the hell further in their scientific expedition.

And so they went. Both of them are in depressed mood. Because everyone knows what an un-executed order of the Party and the government means.

They reached Venus. The academician says that they need to make a stop to research the bread issue, but the comrade from the Kruglov's guard does not want to, "I've known," he says misspelling Venus name, "this damned woman Venerea for a long time—we need to keep away from her, far away, comrade academician!"

"But maybe there is some grain growing on it..."

"It is known well what kind of grain, comrade academician! I would not wish it on my own brother! You see here a problem with my nose? This is all her fault, of your damned Venerea! And you are with your bread! You better fly far away!"

What could he do? It was not possible to defy the order of his superiors. But the reasoning was, so to say, very convincing. In a word, comrade academician did not dare to disobey comrade from the Kruglov's guard, because the punishment in this case would probably be according to the threat, as it is well known, so to speak. Well, so they flew further. Up to the Jupiter.

And what do you think? They succeeded. They reached it and landed on a huge field overgrown with wheat trees! There was so much grain—just don't let the Communist Party here! It would be enough for the whole world with excess! What you say for the whole world—it would be enough even for the whole universe! And what kind of grain it is! Just one grain weighs 200 tons! With that kind of grain, don't you think, that it is possible to feed all the hungry people!

The comrade academician and the comrade from the Kruglov's guard called the general meeting of the Jupiter's citizens, they explained the reason of their visit and, on behalf of their beloved Party and the wise government, they asked the citizens of Jupiter to ship grain to feed the happy Soviet citizens.

As it is well known, the citizens of Jupiter are very kind-hearted people, and they immediately decided, without a second of delay, to ship a known amount of grain to the Earth.

Several minutes later the unusual machines, conveyers and other devices appeared. This whole aggregate was placed in the direction of the Earth and started throwing up the wheat grains with the help of these curious machines. And these grains flew right to the Earth, right into the happy Soviet Union, and right onto the Red Square!

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And Nikitka got scared, and woke up from this interesting dream, which

mesmerized him. But he managed to ask the academician, "So what kind of a government system is over there on Jupiter?"

"The capitalist system!" the academician replied, and the dream ended with the Moscow noise beneath the windows of wise Nikitka...

## A Conversation With the Shadow

It is no fun to live alone. Not to have friends or some relatives. No one to have serious conversations with. And the international situation in the world is gasping, is of deep concern. Where will history go from here? To the right? To the left? Backwards? Or straight forward ahead? And if it will go straight forward, what should mankind expect?

No, it is most positively necessary to talk! Otherwise, one can get into such dead end that... Although Mister Kissinger calms every one down, saying that from any dead end (while he travels spending the taxpayers' money on far-away business trip) there are always two solutions—to wait, until, speaking in medical terms, the dead end blockage dissolves by itself, or—to wait until he, Mister Kissinger, comes back from a far-away business trip and himself “dissolves” the dead end so that he, with a clear conscience, can embark again on a new business trip.

No, it is positively necessary to talk, at least if only to avoid creating the dead ends and not to spend taxpayers' money on the business trips to distant lands.

But with whom to talk? My neighbors, for example if they are not the Mcgoverns, then the Muskies; if not Muskies, than Humphreys; and finally, if not voodoo-crats, then Nixons drinking with Brezhnevs, but regrettably it is impossible to hear or see any Russians in our small town.

But the situation turned out to be not so complicated. It turned out that it is possible to have conversations with your own shadow! And good it was! No one is getting indignant, no one is arguing spitefully all over, no one is short tempered or gets frustrated, it doesn't argue,—I would highly recommend it to the lonely, nervous and stressed folks, especially to the retired, who have all twenty-four hours in a day of free time—talk with your shadow!

Our first conversation with the Shadow touched on the most important topic – about the top political leaders.

Certainly, the intent of the modern governing order was discussed, the way all such leaders are selected, elected, re-elected, self-elected, etc. And the Shadow has stated the argument point-blank, “This situation that exists in the world when for one vacant position of the top leadership ninety-nine candidates are running, it does not stand open to any criticism.

Who would disagree with that? However, I proceeded carefully with the question, “So how do we reduce the number of candidates?”

“Very simple – the post of the top leader in our present day condition is an honorable position, thus he, top leader, should give all of his energy and knowledge in his position absolutely without any compensation and even all his staff of advisers, ministers and secretaries of both genders should be supported out of their own pocket.”

“Well, wait a minute, Shadow,” I was talking with her already as with my relations, “in such a situation the whole country may find itself without the leader at all?”

The Shadow exploded in a laughter, “Guys like Mcgoverns, my dearest friend, will

always find the capital for such an endeavor. And in such case they will most certainly save on welfare!”

Of course such a leader will save not only on welfare!

“Ok,” I agreed, “but this is applicable to the capitalist world and how about the proletarian countries, the communist ones? Everyone there is poor!”

“You see...” the Shadow started with a smile, “neither elections nor re-elections exist there. You are hinting on those assocrats who sit in the Kremlin, where the proletarian sits on top of the proletarian and urges the proletarian? Yeah... There in the first place should be eliminated all salaries to all those ringleaders!”

“Yes, but don’t they need to eat too? And drink? Tea or some other alcohol free stuff. Clothes and shoes, they need them too?”

“Stop, stop, stop! – Shadow raised her voice – not one step further! Because I see that you, my dear and permanent friend, will go as far as their wives and their substitutes! To feed and clothe is certainly necessary, because with the naked politicians, even if they are the top politicians, the western counterparts would not want to talk. So how to go about it? Well, first of all is necessary to shut down all the exclusive stores for political elite. And assign the politicians to a regular *gosmag* where there they will receive the pants, boots and visored caps and, of course, all other clothing; as far as food goes—assign them to one of the factory or student cafeterias and distribute food at strictly enforced times after they stand in line like every one else.”

“Here you, Shadow, used an interesting word—*gosmag*—what does it mean?”

The Shadow started to laugh—she is very funny indeed.

“You know, back in the old days we had black magic. Well, the magic went completely out of style and it was substituted with the government magic; and since the proletarians are very much consumed with building communism, they don’t have time to read long words, so the wise leaders of proletarian class ancestry decided to abbreviate everything: words, rations of bread, the essential food supplies of the first necessity and etc.”

I really have a good Shadow. It is truly like the Big Soviet Encyclopedia. It explains everything. Maybe it would lie, but still explains. The same with the *gosmag*, Translated to Russian *gosmag* means – “to some all, for the rest – none.”

Anyway, my Shadow has more truth than the Soviet Encyclopedia, even though the Encyclopedia is big.

## A Conversation with the Death

Obviously, conversations with this particular person are of little interest to anyone. But it is not my first talk with her; I have met this beautiful lady several times before. But in the past I had to talk for the most part about myself. It was difficult, of course. But I still conversed with her because I did not want to part with my life. Then I hoped that for all intended purposes, the Communist Party would head in the unknown direction, and then we would finally start really living well. And, you should understand, hope is a big thing.

So, well, this particular madam is like all the others. I mean, not exactly like all female gender, but she demands to be respected and loved. She loves to be begged and pleaded, and sometimes she can graciously grant you a reprieve and say: "I will stop by later..."

Wouldn't this make you happy?..

But of course! After all, this "later" might happen when the Kremlin crooks (pardon me for the use of this vulgar word, but sometimes we need to call the things with their real names) would be eliminated from circulation, so to speak.

I have to admit that I had to carry out a conversation with this all-powerful person. I was simply forced to. That's only for the purpose to impart the truth to the immigrant world. Who else would tell this if not the person who struck a bargain...

But I will talk about it later.

By the way, I have to say that the madam is not as interesting as some people imagine her to be. First of all, she is as old as the world itself; secondly, she is as repulsive as the death itself; and thirdly, she is extremely dangerous because she is on friendly terms with the collective leadership.

It happened at night. I learned from the latest news about the death of "dear" comrade Vishinsky.<sup>1</sup>

I will ask you please, my dear reader, don't get exasperated and do not interrupt me. I call you my "dear" because we are fellows in misery and you and I are both Rossiyanye.<sup>2</sup> Comrade Vishinsky is "dear" to all Rossiyanye people because his whole life costs not only the many millions of the hard-earned people's money, but also many millions of human lives!

So when I learned that this "dear comrade" headed to the far-away business trip with only one-way ticket "To," I started to doubt whether he had decided to finish his earthly soviet affairs by himself, or he had been devoured by the Wall-street sharks. And if it were the sharks that swallowed him, whether did they choke on him, because dear comrade Vishinsky had a very imposing figure.

Everyone, of course, knows that you can learn the truth only from the primary source. It is also well known that such a primary source appears to be a, not respected by everyone, madam Death. She knows everything – where, whom when, and on what occasion. She knows all this because she travels all around the world, just like an international currency planned for the future communist society.

I dial a number, "Zero, zero, thirteen."

"Hello, hello!.."

"What happened? An emergency?.." In a second I heard a senile rattling voice.

"Excuse me, madam Death, about the issue that is of interest to me..."

"I know, I know, I am getting inquiries from the whole world, and most of them are coming from displaced persons like you. How tired I am of you. You are a displaced person, aren't you?"

"You and I know each other a little bit..."

"I knew it!.. Already an acquaintance! Only displaced persons can talk like this! Oh! How tired I am of your calls. If only I had a minute of peace!"

"But madam Death, I have an extremely important question that worries all the emigrant humanity!"

"I know all your questions! Remember once and for all, I was not sent to him by anyone from this world!"

"And how about someone from the other world?" I dared to ask.

"Really, I have no right to talk about it... It's a secret. But to you... As an old acquaintance... Since I came to visit you once..."

"And not just once!.."

"Yes, yes, I remember... I used to visit you... Well, all right... Only remember, don't tell anyone..."

"What are you talking about! Madam Death, we have known each other for many years!"

"Yes, yes, I know... But only under a big secret..."

"Of course," I promised.

"Comrade Stalin sent me... He promised me a handsome honorarium. It's because he found a good position for Vishinsky at the Satan's place. He is going to serve as an executioner. It implies a first-rate salary and ration tickets of the "AP" level (the first category of underground workers), and if he does well on the job, then he will get access to the exclusive supply distribution store!"

Then I braved it out and asked, "Would it be possible, my highly-respected one, to somehow send there all the collective leadership and give them access to the exclusive supply distribution store"?

"Hey you, dreamers! I am a lady outside of politics. I don't care who gives the order, as long as there is a substantial honorarium. And what can I get from you? You would not be able to make a little bit from here and there, because soon you will have as many political organizations as there are emigrants themselves! And I serve everyone to the best of my ability..."

"But what about principles?.."

"You silly little thing! What kind of principles are you talking about in our age of peaceful coexistence? It is does not do much good that you abroad don't like comrade Vishinsky..."

"What can I tell you..."

"The collective leadership cannot be dissuaded by anyone... Let them think that it was the handiwork of the capitalists, I don't care..." and madam Death hanged the phone at that comment.

Of course, I hanged the phone, too. I did not even get a chance to say goodbye.



And I did not even want to talk about anything anymore. This lady does not have any principles. She would run with the hare and hunt with the hound. She wants only honorarium! Well, true I wanted to ask her about the fate of the palace in New York, where “dear” comrade Vishinsky lived, because the old woman was supposed to know everything. Maybe she has even to receive the palace as an inheritance?

Still, I did not ask because this lady is not the most pleasant one. She can get angry. And about the palace I decided that probably it would be occupied now by some new fry... That’s fine. I would not really mind. Madam Death knows her way around there!

## The Fog

So, the team arrived. A soccer team, of course. From the Soviet Union to the United Kingdom. They came to compete, not just to look around. They came, so to say, to show “supremacy” in a soccer field.

Well, it is clear, they came to show the damned capitalists how the scores are made in the free communist society by driving the balls into the enemy gates. They say, by the way, that sometimes the Soviet players drive the soccer balls so far off, that they cannot find them in Vorkuta!<sup>1</sup> You see, what kind of soccer players are in the happy soviet country!

Of course, those balls that get to Vorkuta are in charge of the ministry of internal affairs. But the sphere of various gymnastics and in general, of various physical culture, there is a different question—here there is a need to show “supremacy,” not only because the socialist-communist soccer players can deliver goals. It is because socialism-communism possesses advantages everywhere in all the spheres—in the issues of pork production and in corn crop, in atomic research and in smelting of steel, and in Molotov’s diplomacy, and, therefore, also in physical culture.

It is absolutely clear that we should not have any doubts about soviet supremacy in any field. How many gold and silver medals, how many various badges and various diplomas, how many world records has the soviet communist government snatched through their athletes, just this year?!.. After all, the whole world now knows about soviet achievements in this very important sphere of building the communist classless society.

Some people on this side of the border doubted that all these achievements were based on the communist upbringing of younger generation. As for us, well, we did not have any other opinions about that. And how it could be different? If you were steeped in the communist ideology, you too would have been winning world-wide prizes!

In the USSR, in our time, there was even an anecdote about physical training. Comrade marshal Voroshilov was in charge of military affairs some time ago. Once, he wanted to show off his younger soldiers before the foreigners. He put the whole Red field forces on the Red Square in the city of Moscow in front of the mausoleum of dear Ilyich,<sup>1</sup> and addressed messieurs foreign guests with the following speech:

“Do you, messieurs foreign delegates, see the bell-tower of the Ivan the Great?”

His speech hesitated in this place, but no loud applause followed, and only one third-rate delegate answered, frightened, “Yes, we do. We are not blind yet...”

“So tell me, would your soldiers dare to jump from such height? Hm?..”

Messieurs foreign guests consulted a little, held a council, and then started jabbering altogether at once:

“Oh, no, mister marshal Voroshilov, it is absolutely impossible in our capitalist world that a soldier risked such a daring undertaking! And our commanders would have never thought of such... so to say... brave...”

“But our Red Army soldier,” interrupted comrade marshal Voroshilov, is capable

of performing all sorts of heroic acts for the sake of building socialism in our country!" solemnly retorted the marshal.

"Really?! Is that so?!" messieurs foreign guests started clamoring again, "It is simply impossible!"

"It would be very interesting to see, messieurs!" proclaimed some adventure-seekers.

Well, to tell you the truth, it was exactly what the marshal wanted: for someone to agree to gawk at his socialist drilling of the Red Army soldiers.

"Our Red Army men," continued his speech comrade marshal, "are ready to carry out any order of our dear party and our wise government any minute!"

"Yes, yes," said one delegate, "indeed, we would be very interested in seeing this so that we could transfer your experience to our capitalist soil..."

But by that time comrade marshal did not care to listen to anyone.

"Well, take a look here! Ivanov!" he called a soldier from the field Red Army.

"Yes, comrade marshal!" the Red Army man sprang from the formation.

"Now, fellow, you need to jump from the bell tower of Ivan the Great for the sake of building the socialism-communism!"

"Yes, comrade marshal!" reported the Red Army man and headed for the aforementioned bell tower to execute marshal's order.

This very moment one of the delegate's nerves got the best of him. He turned out to be timid but thinking delegate. He stopped comrade Red Army soldier Ivanov and asked, "Are you, mister Red Army man, really ready to jump from such an incredible height for the sake of your socialism?"

"And what difference does it make for us, citizen, how we are going to die from this socialism? It is even better from the bell-tower height—wham-bam and you are done, so to speak—there was an Ivanov, and in a second Ivanov does not exist anymore!"

They say that this foreign guest then realized the full scale of the whole communist physical culture and implored the marshal to withdraw his order. Let that Red Army soldier die a slow socialist death.

True, it was a long time ago. When the marshal was the people's commissar for military affairs. But the socialist knack remained to this day. That is why the soviet government earns medals and prizes with diplomas with their own physical culturists. This is done, so to speak, in the name of socialism.

So, the team came to England. The team is called "Spartak." All members of the team are specialists in soccer-related field. They came to win the championship. They came to show all the benefits of the communist physical culture. They came to fight with the capitalist soccer players of the English ancestry. And apparently, they did. In the town of Wolverhampton...

Maybe because comrade marshal Voroshilov was not present, maybe because the English did not have time to erect the bell tower of Ivan the Great in Wolverhampton, but "Spartak" lost. Completely. Ignominiously, so to speak, ...4:0, and not in their favor.

Let's say, it was a very sad occurrence in the life of the dear soviet government and wise communist party. On November 15, Moscow did not mention a word about it in the "Latest News" on the radio. And gentlemen English readers were offended by this silence. On what kind of ground are they silent? If you lost, acknowledge your communist weakness before capitalism! And they started printing subtle references to

a glaring fact and irritating the communist authority because it is not for nothing that they peacefully coexisted with comrades from Kremlin!

And Moscow remained silent for a while, but then finally decided to talk. And not just to talk, but also to admit, and at the same time not to admit, but reduce to nothing the achievements of the English team. Well, that is, reduce almost to nothing.

The collective leadership felt awkward. Maybe not exactly awkward, but it was practically impossible to upset relations with the English citizens just because of some kind of soccer, when international conferences on very important matters of the peaceful coexistence are nigh at hand. And gentlemen English diplomats can help comrade Molotov everywhere. They can help in Berlin, and in Geneva, and in Paris, and in Moscow, and in Washington, and in the UN, and in Korea, and in Vietnam... And, for example, is the conference of 25 countries, or maybe 225. Or, even the world-wide conference. So the collective leadership ordered the "Latest News" to air a truthful account, pointing out important reasons that have precluded the communist victory on the English soccer field.

The announcement was made on November 17. It was unusually efficient response on the part of the comrades. Just like during the sowing season. There were as many excuses as in the soviet reports that were published in the central communist newspapers during the Soviet-German war. And fog got to be the culprit. To tell you the truth, fog happened the day before... and it dispersed before the game. But there was a fog. And an unfamiliar field was to blame. And there was the heroic defense, and under the pressure of superior enemy forces...

But no one looked at the root of things. The main reason was that "Spartak" was not proficient in the history of the Communist party and no members of the team dared to jump from the bell tower of Ivan the Great for the sake of building socialism in one country!

And you are saying, "Fog!"

## “Dears”

You probably heard? Did you? How it was happening in Geneva? What a security! Five hundred police officers were mobilized for guarding “dear”<sup>1</sup> progressive, peace-loving, communist “democrats”! This measure cost a pretty penny to the Swiss government! Or maybe the Swiss did not even pay police officers; we don’t know for sure.

Maybe “dears” paid for it themselves. Because their bloody money is stored in the Swiss bank for any urgent needs. For example, the money for the murder of Okolovich. Or for seizing doctor Trushnovich. It is inconvenient, besides the counterfeit passports, to have the false foreign currency with you, is it not? In the blinking of an eye, they may catch in the act the “honest” diplomats! And they are not just simple people—they are real “dears”. In every communist newspaper, they write about them—collective leadership – “dear,” deputies – dear,” ministers – “dear.” Every one of them is “dear,” except the Russian people...

Yes. So they arrived in Geneva. Of course, “dears,” no question about it. If they write in the newspapers, no one can object. Not to a newspaper. Because it will not understand anything in all this mess.

And because all diplomats are “dears,” all of them are sitting in their hotels. They sit and do not go out for fresh Swiss air. And they are guarded as if they are some kind of a treasure. Do you know why? Only because they are very “dear.”

Let us say, for example, that Swiss proletarians wanted to look at proletarian leadership, but it is impossible. They got themselves all locked up. And all the windows are tightly closed. Maybe because it is forbidden to look at the treasure free of charge. And the payment is well known. It is a world revolution all over Switzerland. The proletariat is stupid in Switzerland. They do not want to make there the world revolution. They say it is good for them to live with capitalists in Swiss world.

The only thing, the Swiss capitalists behave indecently. Not like it is supposed to for democratic capitalists. They keep in their banks the money for a cause of that revolution, which if it happens would in the first place sweep them off from the face of the Swiss land!

Well, and the “dears” are sitting locked up. Why? They would better be gone for a walk in the small town of Geneva to admire the sights, the Alps, and other Swiss mountains... and small Geneva lake.. To breathe the pure mountain air... It is most likely that their hotels rooms are filled with smoke and spit... So to say, there is absolutely nothing to breathe from the Kremlin’s word-ramblers. No. They still sit. Hatching out something. And keep quiet, as if they do not exist in the Swiss land. They travel to the conference only with strengthened security and hide their disgusting physiognomies from honest people. And why, one needs to ask? They lost their shame a long time ago. Probably thirty-six years ago? Or, maybe, they are afraid to be pointed at? So that some Swiss proletarian would not shout, “Bloodsuckers of people! The worldwide-scale bandits! Murderers of the defenseless people!”

But they must have been used to it for a long time. More than once they had heard it from their own people. Also abroad, the proletariat loudly proclaimed the anathema by the Soviet embassies and delegations. But, the “dearest” have the thieves’ principle: “Shame is not a smoke—it does not burn the eyes.”

Therefore, they are sitting locked up. However, it is not only because some of the proletariat about whom they care so much will tell them the word of truth in their faces. But, because they are afraid, that this proletariat could throw a brick from behind the corner. Into their physiognomy, so to say. Then there would not be “dears” diplomats who are caring for war and not for peace.

Sure, “dears” are mistaken. Abroad there are no such people who could hit them on physiognomy. People here were brought up without MGB<sup>2</sup> tactics.

## Growing Needs

You see, now in Esesera<sup>1</sup> they speak much about growing needs of the Soviet population. These talks are, certainly, extremely ancient. It is even possible to say they are with the beard, even with gray beard, and one with a rather respectful age. Therefore we remember about growing needs during those long gone times when we were lucky to be personally present at the great construction of socialism-communism. And not only to be present, but now we can courageously confess, that to some degree we assisted in the building of the grand building of communism, which was always falling on us, on its builders...

I remember, that once we read a lot of various literature and other smeared and blurred papers. Of all kinds, even periodical. And we read socialist novels. Also – the history of the party. And the newspapers—that was in order of necessity. Because, with our education was simply dangerous to exist as an irresponsible element, and in general, as backward citizens. Anyone could have caught us, that the leading article of “Pravda” had not been studied well, and we would have been perished in the prime of life, health, youth, and other fascinations of human bourgeois life.

And after reading a certain known quantity of communist literature, something uncertain happened to us that was absolutely unforeseen by the propaganda department of the city party committee. We believed in what was written. And this belief had such effect on us that we started to turn into... But why talk about it! The facts will tell about it themselves.

My needs grew up! And how quickly?! Within one night! Let us say, in the evening I went to sleep, so to say, as a quite normal Soviet citizen, but in the morning, you know, not everything was well... Everything happened so strangely that I myself was surprised! Yesterday, let's say, I hadn't any needs, and today, not only have they appeared, but grown! And they were not only grown, but also continuing to grow!

And therefore, could it have been happening indefinitely? In fact, it is not only terrible, but it would be quite awful! Is it possible to exist in Esesera with always escalating needs? At that time I understood it very well. And the most important, is that these needs grew only within one night! And what would have further? Let's say, within two, nights? Within three? Within four? And so on? It would have been possible for me to get some kind of award from our dear Soviet government for several years!

However, I shall distract your attention a little aside. But not too far. I have a spouse. Not some kind of an emigrant from the DP<sup>2</sup> camp, but entirely and completely legal one. And at that faraway time, as a matter of fact, almost all citizens had exclusively the most legal spouses. And certainly, I was among them. That is clear, among the citizens.

And so, this my most legal spouse was awfully worried by my condition. She was looking at me and noticed how my needs were growing. Growing concretely. Quite evidently. And, sure, she was scared of these growing needs, because how one possibly could satisfy them under the present pointless condition of the market and the

abundance promised by the wise party and dear government?

"Why are you in so nervous condition?" my dearest half asked me.

"What? I am? Why?"

"It is because your low extremities are making funny movements... I am afraid they will suspect that you are having intention of doing something of absolutely forbidden character, my dearest! Then what would you order me, to live individually?"

Speaking shortly, after two or three words, my growing needs were clarified and my spouse indignantly exclaimed, "You see! I already thought about it! Egoism! Exclusively characteristic egoism! The most illegal, the most forbidden desires! And what does remain for us to do in this terrible world?.. Oh! What kind of unhappy life! Ah, how hard is our woman's fate under the present difficulties of growing socialism!"

"When, when?" I asked without any particular interest.

"When! After you will satisfy your growing needs," my dearest half replied with bitterness.

I looked surprisingly at my grieved and most legal spouse and even noticed some quantity of quite big tears in her eyes, I even would say, Stakhanov's<sup>3</sup> tears.

"Do you think to leave me a widow for a reason of your martyr's death or to leave me in unknown condition of aloneness because of your departure somewhere to the Far North?"

"My dearest, why are you in such uncertain condition about our future? Do you really think that I dream about disappearing?.."

"You, you," my dearest half exclaimed indignantly several times while leading me by hand, as if I am under age, to the only window we have in our huge one-room apartment. This window looks at the square of the October Revolution and shows that side where the State Publishing bookstore is located.

We looked at the square together and did not notice any empty place there. A crowd of people were in front of the bookstore. It looked as if all citizens of our town with their grown-within-one-night needs got there to celebrate the day of October Revolution...

"They brought three bicycles for the one-hundred-and-seventy-five-thousand population of our town," my spouse quite confidentially informed me.

And all my growing needs were taken away like by an invisible hand... Since that day, my needs in general never grew at all...

I am saying this because here, I mean abroad, these bicycles are hanging everywhere and there is no desire to even look at them!.. Is it, maybe, because my grandchildren are riding them like crazy?.. And without staying in line to buy them... And there are no growing needs!



## In Honor of the Tricentenary

One would listen to what is going on in “that”<sup>1</sup> world, and one would start to think what is going on up “there,” and then one would be lost in thoughts about the past, the present, and the future...

How many countries are in this God’s world, how many different people! And most live quietly, peacefully, without any praise of achievements, without over-fulfilling industrial norms, quotas and plans! And they have everything they need! And no one anywhere eulogizes either the wise party or dear government!

And it is understandable. Well, tell me please, what proletarian will eulogize capitalist government of the USA for its participation in the conference with the soviets?! Tell me please, what proletarian will sing dithyrambs to the conservative party of England for its desire at any cost to buy a friendly inclination to communist party of Esesera?!<sup>2</sup>

But there is a country... Whether it is a country? No. That is not a country. It is a continuous socialist watch! It is continuous socialist competition, continuous increase of slaves’ performance norms and lowering of life conditions, it is continuous collective farm, which stretches over twenty-one million square kilometers and, on the board of government of which sit the self-appointed imposters! No. It is not a country. It is a huge concentration camp, in which criminals are among the security guards and the innocent people are imprisoned as criminals!

And there, in that concentration camp, in which people even sleep as it on Stakhanov<sup>3</sup> watch—keenly, not losing vigilance, pondering on the new socialist victories. In this huge collective farm, criminal security guards demand not only eulogizing chanting in their glory, not only composing of odes devoted to the collective farm authority, but also for industrial victories, devoted... to what? Oh! Collective farm authority will think it up! All they do is invent social-historical whips with which they would be able to urge march forward their disobedient citizens!

“In honor of First of May<sup>4</sup> to over-fulfill the plan for hundred percent!”

“In the honor of The Day of The Press for...”

“In the honor of The Day of Radio...”

But it seemed that there are not enough calendar dates for them. And as it seems, not even the first or the second of May are helping, nor the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth of October! So, the collective farm authority has to dig into history. But not the history of their own party, but the history of Russia, and on the stage of socialist life the new whips are pushed out.

“In honor of the Two-hundred-fiftieth Anniversary of the Kronstadt<sup>5</sup> fortress...”

“In honor of the Tercentenary of the reunion of Ukraine with Russia...”

And collective farmers, workers, technical officers, professors, teachers and pupils begin to be urged... And the production plans are over-fulfilled for fabulous percentages...

So what is it? “Heroes-Stakhanovites” are over-fulfilling industrial norms only in

the honor of “days” and “anniversaries”? But what if these “days” and “anniversaries” would not exist? What would be then? How would the happy soviet population live, when under the super-achievements “of Stakhanovites and the achievements in “the honor of...” in the Esesera people could buy nothing—everywhere is empty—you can roll a ball?

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Oh! There was Russia before. No plans. No norms. No “days” and “anniversaries” in the honor of what someone would think up to make a noise of free-of-charge fuss. But what abundance, of every possible goods, there was! What freedom everyone had—buy whatever you want! And people knew neither famine nor cold, they didn’t walk undressed or barefoot, did not stand in lines for hours for common daily bread! Ah! That was the country! But there shall be the country! There shall be Russia!

## At the Ticket Office

Foreigners estimating Soviet achievements rose high into space much sooner than the communist Sputnik. But the Sputnik burned down, there is no trace of it left. However, the foreign overestimates of communist achievements continues to exist.

If foreigners would only come down to earth from space, right into the collective farmer's hut or into the worker's "apartment," if they would enter a communist beer house, or ride in a soviet street-car in forty degree frost from one end of Moscow to another, or if they stand in line for a ticket in the railway station, or try to go some place in a soviet train, not as a foreigner but like a common soviet citizen. And, if these foreigners would tried to "fulfill plan norms," "exceed last year's quantitative and qualitative showing" and generally be "conscientious socialist workers," only then will they learn the real truth about communist achievements.

I have not traveled by rail for very long time. I forget all its charm. And, frankly speaking, I do not know the new "delights." Nevertheless, I have tried socialist transport. True, I was lucky enough, but I saw something that can horrify gentlemen foreigners.

With my business travel certificate, in which it was written that I am going on strictly state business so important, no one could not even dream—if I would not arrive on time, the Soviet authority would cease to exist. My travel certificate had very strong expressions. I was surprised myself why they were so sharp, but it seems that even razors are not sharp enough.

Outside it was a cold and rainy September. The tiled floor of the railroad station was ornamented with patterns of liquid mud. Corridors were empty. It is very late at night. I am calmly coming to the third class hall where the ticket office is located. I open the door and stop frozen from surprise. In front of me there is a human wall. No way to go through it. Over this human mass—dense clouds of smoke from *makhorka*<sup>1</sup> and cheap tobacco. A dull light of electric lanterns struggles through this cloud of smoke. The low hum of voices seems as if it had thickened in disharmony and barely flowed through the opened doors of the hall.

By the doors a few people are densely pressed to each other. They lean with their backs against the backs of the people ahead of them. Someone casts an indifferent glance at me and right away looks away. Some faces show indifference, others – heavy thoughts, about the impossible that needs to be solved.

"Is it possible that all are traveling?" I thought, while searching for a place into which it would be easier to squeeze. Making way through the crowd at turtle speed, I am convinced that one does not see any homeless people. Even the small thieves whom I met on my way were passengers, because they had a narrow soviet occupation as the train pilferers. Their dexterity was so great that they managed to play cards in such incredibly packed space!

At last I am by the ticket office. There are two inscriptions on the ticket window: "For business trip" – to the left, "Resorts" – to the right. I am trying to stand, if it is possible to name the process of pressing myself in to the left side.

Some voices resound, "In line! In line!"

The nearest are peacefully explaining, "Do you see, over there in the soldier's uniform?.."

"With the torn off peak cap..."

"There he is, he is lighting a cigarette now..."

"He is the last one... So you need to stand behind him..."

I can see nothing. "Dressed in soldier's uniform with 'torn off peak cap,'" so he must be in a fore-and-aft-cap, a forage cap. There are a lot of heads in sight. But I don't need them, because I am on a business trip and don't need to stay in line!

"I am on a business trip," I am explaining.

"On business trip! On business trip!" Voices are passing in turn.

Right away everyone is calmed down. A voice behind me, "May be he will get it..."

A squeaky female voice explains, "Dear man, we have been sitting here for three weeks... Without any moving... There are no tickets..."

"Is it really for three weeks?" someone asks.

"Three, my dearest... We are sitting here without a glimmer of hope..."

"Now it is the same if we sit or stand..."

"Or hang..." a new voice adds.

"In one word, we are choking..."

It was the beginning of political discussion, very unpleasant, dangerous, but very interesting. But it must not be expanded; allegoric and laconic expressions suddenly stop as an NKVD<sup>2</sup> figure appears near me, "Are you, comrade, on a business trip?"

"Yes," I answer without embarrassment.

"But mine is a little bit more important," he says with importance, but emphasizing the words "a little bit."

I do not have to argue. I know he will get it first anyway. Immediately the window of the ticket office opens. NKVD man gets his ticket and leaves. Right away the ticket window closes. I am perplexed. People around me are calming me down, "You see, comrade, that is all."

I am knocking on the ticket window. No one opens for long time. But I am persevering and the cashier nervously opens the window and shouts, "No tickets, citizens!.."

"I am on business trip," I am telling him calmly. Suddenly the cashier changes his attitude. With a lovely smile he says, "It is almost impossible... Try to go to the department of NKVD. Sometimes it works..."

I try. I get into the corridor and right away face the door with the inscription, which is scaring every soviet citizen. Boldly I knock on the door. No one opens. Slightly opening the door I ask, "May I?"

"Well, come in, whoever is there."

"I am on a business trip..."

"We know, we know you... All of you are going on important state business... And if you will not be on time, the soviet authority stops to exist in this world!"

The NKVD men that met me with unfriendly manner were playing cards. They were used to such trifles and did not pay attention to me. But I was persistent. "I am on a business trip..."

"So what do you want?"

"Ticket for the train."

"Did cashier tell you that there are no open seats on the train?"

"Yes he did."

"Where do you work?"

I explained where I was working and why I am on the business trip.

"So, comrade, you are a teacher! Prokhorov, arrange him a ticket..."

In a few minutes I was running along the standing train but conductors did not let me enter the cars. Only at the end of the train woman-conductor let me in, "So," I thought, "There are no more cars left."

Entering the car I was surprised—not even one living soul in the car, not even one person there! I am asking the woman-conductor, "Is it only your car empty?"

"No, absolutely not! Almost the whole train is empty!"

Further inquiries are in vain—both of us understand that this is socialism.

I reflected, whether there is a need to write how people travel in the "cursed" capitalist countries? Yes, it is worth it. Because "over there" the system did not change, but the newspaper "Rossia" nevertheless is getting into the USSR and someone is reading it. And, if someone reads it, then, as of the Russian proverb, "the rumor spreads all over the world."

So, here it is.

Once I was getting ready to go to New York. My driver was delayed on the road.

Worried, I said to the driver "I will be late to my train..."

"You will take another one."

"If there will be no tickets?"

"You will buy it in the car..."

"Wouldn't they fine me?"

"What does it mean?"

I am explaining.

"No, there are no such things here."

And, in fact, as soon as I jumped into the car, right before the train took off, the conductor came to me, "Your ticket, please?"

"I was not in time to buy it..." I answered with some confusion and some fear "What if they will fine me?" I thought.

"Where do you go?"

"To New York."

Conductor gave me the ticket and I calmly arrived to the place of my destination. How simple is everything in this "cursed" capitalist world! They keep the law, no one pays penalties, and people are completely calm. And it is so good to live in the free world!

## Beri-Ya, Beri-Ty—I-take, You-take

Beri-Ya,<sup>1</sup> Beri-Ty<sup>2</sup>—I-take, you-take—  
Better I take than you take—  
Molot-kovs, Malen-kovs—thieves  
Voro-shilovs, and Khryu-shchevs.<sup>3</sup>

In the vegetable garden are tall weeds,  
In the Kremlin – kuterma—what a mess!  
Beri-Ya, Beri-Ty—I-take, you-take  
Better I take than you take.

They smothered Dzhugashvili,<sup>4</sup>  
Did not find his last will,  
They divided Soviet Power,  
And came to agreement.

They divided, split it up,  
But did not ask the people,  
Malenkov<sup>5</sup>—first movie star  
Beriya—was the second.

Beriya's face got red,  
From the rage he lost his mind,  
“Why am I the number two?”  
Of them all—I am the head!

“Let's get rid of prime minister  
By a well-known method,  
I had tested in CheKa<sup>6</sup>  
With ‘enemies of the people.’”<sup>7</sup>

He gave orders to his cronies,  
“Lie in wait for Malenkov,”  
Placed them along all the roads  
For assured deadly welcome.

The “Red” barin<sup>8</sup> gave the order  
To shoot the prime minister.  
Chekist stood at the Kremlin gates  
With a bullet from arbalest.

Suddenly at Kremlin gate  
Chekist's shot rang out.  
And Malenkov's entourage  
Scampered in fear around.

The bullet flew past him  
Did not strike his head.  
The chekist was promptly seized  
And thrown straight in jail.

He was questioned, they clarified,  
Tangle of intrigue was untwisted  
From the courtyard of Kremlin  
To the threshing floor of Chekists.

And Beriya, the Communist,  
Beriya, Minister-Chekist,  
Was thrown in the cellar.  
Causing party great scandal!

"Beriya, the Communist,  
Beriya—the imperialist,  
You're an Irish spy,  
Saboteur for Spanish!"

You have lost your time,  
To climb to a leader's post!  
We know well your tribe  
From the Red Kremlin!

(You should believe my word)  
From your own hands doing,  
It might have been Malenkov  
Who could be in your place.

And the rival-communist,  
Malenkov—the imperialist  
Could have been declared by law.  
As a spy and saboteur.

And now, you spawn of Satan,  
Prepare your soul for hell,  
Bullet in your head is your reward,  
It's your loyal party love.

Either way, you admit your sins

By your own tested methods;  
Don't you know about this  
From the innocent people?

In the pack of dogs there always be  
A big fuss over a bone,  
Who is strongest will gnaw it  
And strangle the weakest plunderer.

And as for your hooligans,  
All the Chekist-criminals,  
They will choke on your blood  
And will jeer at you.

Don't be mournful, O you, enemy of the people,  
All the same, for Malenkov,  
Thief Vor-oshilov and Khru-shchev  
Same misfortune like yours awaits.

Beri-Ya, Beri-Ty—I take, you-take—  
Better I take than you take—  
Molotkovs, Malenkovs,  
Thief Voro-shilovs and Khru-shchevs.

In the vegetable garden – tall weeds,  
In the Kremlin – kuterma—what a mess!  
I-take, you-take—  
Better I take than you take!



# Appendix



# Cross Reference List to Manuscripts and Published Works

## Abbreviations

1. Orest M. Gladky, Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, Olga Gladky Verro, Giulio Verro. 1995-2010. *Caught in the Web of History: Nikita S. Khrushchev's Teacher and Her Family Remember the Sweep of Events That Destroyed the Life of Millions*. Compiler, translator and editor Olga Gladky Verro. English editor Oliver W. Kellogg. 2006. Unpublished MS TS, MS PC and CD. The reference to this work: is thereafter cited abbreviated as *Caught in the Web of History*.

2. Orest M. Gladky, Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, Olga Gladky Verro. 2010. *Branded An Enemy of the People: Selected Stories From the Life of an Immigrant Writer Preserving Facts and Thoughts for Posterity to Pause and Ponder*. MS TS, MS PC and CD. The reference to work is thereafter cited abbreviated as *Branded An Enemy of the People*.

3. All cited manuscripts and published works are 1980-2010 Copyright © Olga Gladky Verro and all are from the private collection of Olga Gladky Verro, except for those otherwise noted in the entry.

4. MS – manuscript, MS, TS – typewritten manuscript.

5. MS PC and CD – manuscript on computer and CD.

## A Conversation With the Death

Orest M. Gladky. November 24, 1954. "Razgovor so smertiyu." MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 98-100.

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3. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Ras-s-kulachu." (in Russian). *Vo imya chego?..* MS, TS. collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 65.

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Orest M. Gladky. May 28, 1954. "V chest trekhstolyetiya." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 38-39.

#### **In Malenkov's Farce Show**

Orest M. Gladky. December 13, 1954. "V Malenkovskom balaganye." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 109-112.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. 1956. "V tyurme." (in Russian). MS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.
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Orest M. Gladky. October 2, 1954. "V golubom polumrake." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 100-103.

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2. —. (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1953. "In the Waiting Room." Trans. W. Kate Hyne. MS, TS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.
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Orest M. Gladky. November 18, 1955. "Proekt genialny." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 155-156.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). July 21, 1972. "Sluchai na seanse filma 'Bronyenosets Potyemkin.'" *Newsp. Rossiya*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 83487.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). March 22, 1972. "Prorok." (in Russian). *Newsp. Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8313:6.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). January 6, 1971. "Komsomolka Kulya." (in Russian). Series "Portrety Starogo Alboma." *Newsp. Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8187:4-5.

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Orest M. Gladky. May, 1956. "Videniye chudesnoye." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 152-154.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Predpaskhalnoye." (in Russian). *Vo imya chego?..*



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2. — (R. Mikhnyevich, pseud.). March 1955. "Na obshchem sobranii." (in Russian). (K strashnomu yubilyeyu – 25-tiliyetiyu sushchestvovaniya kolkhozov) [For the terrible anniversary of the 25 years existence of the kolkhozes]. Journ. *Zhar Ptyza*. San Francisco.

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Orest M. Gladky. January 30, 1955. "Nikitkin son." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 140-142.

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Orest M Gladky. December 21, 1954. "V doroge." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 112-115.

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2. — (R. Michnyevich, pseud.). February-March, 1956. "Na kanikulakh." (in Russian). Journ. *Zhar Ptyza*. San Francisco. 20-23.

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2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). February, 1973. "Sozialisticheskiy poselok." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8409.

3. Orest M. Gladky and Olga Gladky Verro. 1995-2010. "Hamlet Kisyelyevka." Part 6, "The Years of Stalin's Dictatorship." *Caught in the Web of History*.

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1. Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). February 24, March 1, 3, 1967. "Vo Imya Chego?.." Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 7785:4, 7786:4, 7787:6.

2. — (O. Mikhailov pseud.). 1970. "Vo Imya Chego?.." *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 1-5.

3. —. 1995-2010. "In Whose Name." Part "Prolog." *Caught in the Web of History*.

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Orest M. Gladky. October, 1970. "Moy mily drug." (in Russian). MS, TS addition to collection. *Vo Imya Chego?..* Manchester, Connecticut. 20.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). June 30, 1972. "Khranit vechno." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8342:6-7.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. May 21, 1954. "Nagrazhdyeniye." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 31-32.

2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1954. "Nagrazhdyeniye." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing.

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2. — (O. Mikhailov pseud.). January 8, 1971. "Umyeyuchi." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8188:638:4-5.

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1. Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). September 4, 1970. "Vzveytes sokoly orlami!" (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8152:3, 7

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Orest M. Gladky. (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Ryebryshko kopchenoye." (in Russian). Series "Socialisticheskiye budny tovarishcha Ptichkina-Pevichkina." *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 170-171.

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2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). July 9, 1953. "Stakhanovshchina bez entuziazma." (in Russian).

Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 5158.

3. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Stakhanovshchina bez entuziasma." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 117-119.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. n.d. "Na kulturnom fronte." MS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

2. — (O. Mikhailov pseud.). 1970. "Na kulturnom fronte." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 143-147.

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Orest M. Gladky. May 1954. "Udachnoye Begstvo." An excerpt from "Sumasshedshy muzykant." MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 39-43, 63.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. 1952. "Svyet i tyeni." (in Russian). MS, TS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). August 13, 1952. "Svyet i tyeni." (in Russian). Series "Portrety Starogo Alboma." Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 4931.

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Orest M. Gladky. May 19, 1954. "Golos diktora." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 16.

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Orest M. Gladky. May, 1954. "The Banner of White Armies Young Volunteers." Excerpts from "Love." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Dyela perchatochnye." (in Russian). Series "Socialisticheskiye budny tovarishcha Ptichkina-Pevichkina." *Vo Ima Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 161-162.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. 1953. "Knyaz." (in Russian). MS, TS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1953. "The Count." Trans. W. Kate Hyne, MS, TS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

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Orest M. Gladky. May, 1954. "Dyen." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 4-5.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. 1953. "Na khutorye." (in Russian). MS, TS Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

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Orest M. Gladky. 1970. "Vostok pyayet." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 14-19.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Pyervy kolkhozny hod." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 78-93.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. November 17, 1954. "Tuman." MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 95-98.

2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1954. "Tuman." Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing.

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Orest M. Gladky. December 1, 1954. "Sluchay s krovatkoj." (in Russian). MS, TS collection. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England. 103-106.

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2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). November 4, 1960. "Poslyednyaya vstryecha." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 6970.

3. —. 1995-2010. "The Last Encounter." Part 4, "Under the Bolsheviks' Rule." *Caught in the Web of History*.

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2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). May 20, 1953. "Posledneye ispitanie." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 5122.

3. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Posledneye ispitanie." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 157-158.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). May 26, 1971. "Pyervomay." (in Russian). Series "Portrety Starogo Alboma." Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8226:3, 6.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. n.d. "Naidemocratichneysheye golosovaniye." (in Russian). MS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). February 10, 1954. "Naidemocratichneysheye golosovaniye." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 5299.

3. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.) 1970. "Naidemocratichneysheye golosovaniye." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 155.

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2. —. 1995-2010. "The Noble Hearts." Part 2, "Revolution and Civil War." *Caught in the Web of History*.

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*People.*

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Orest. M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov pseud.). October 20, 1971. "Prokuror." *Newsp. Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 8273:2-3, 6.

#### **The Sleep-Walker**

Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Lunatik." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 132.

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1. Orest. M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov pseud.). July 24, 1953. "Dvizheniye stakhanovskoye." *Newsp. Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 5169.

2. — (O. Mikhailov pseud.). 1970. "Dvizheniye stakhanovskoye." *Vo Ima Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 156.

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Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Step zovet." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 72-73.

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2. —. 1952. "The Story of Comrade Suffermuch." Trans. by W. Kate Hyne. 1954. MS, TS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.

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5. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). 1970. "Poslyednyeye ispytaniye." (in Russian). *Vo Ima Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut.

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2. Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). August 28, 1952. "Dyadyushka Evlampy." (in Russian). *Newsp. Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing. 4942.

3. —. 1995-2010. "Uncle Pavel." Part 4, "Under the Bolsheviks' Rule." *Caught in the Web of History*.

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1. Orest M. Gladky. May 5-8, 1954. "Dobrovoltsy." With excerpts from "Lyubov." (in Russian). MS, TS, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, Great Britain.
2. — "Volunteers," 1993. MS, TS, MS PC, CD. Trans. Olga Gladky Verro.
3. —. 1995-2010. "White Army Volunteers." Part 2, "Revolution and Civil War." *Caught in the Web of History*.
4. —. 2010. "White Army Volunteers." Part "Young White Army Volunteers." *Branded An Enemy of the People*.

#### **Wrangel's Army Volunteer**

1. Orest M. Gladky. 1952. "Wrangelyevets." (in Russian). MS, TS. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England.
2. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud.). June 21, 1952. "Wrangelyevets." (in Russian). Newsp. *Rossia*. New York: Rossia Publishing,. 4900.
3. — (O. Mikhailov, pseud). 1970. "Wrangelyevets." (in Russian). *Vo Imya Chego?..* MS, TS collection. Manchester, Connecticut. 114.

## Notes

All works cited below and annotated as translated by individual translators were edited by the Russian Editor, Olga Gladky Verro, and by the English Editor, Oliver W. Kellogg.

### **A Conversation With the Death**

\* Translated by Natalie Bayer.

1. Andrei Y. Vishinsky – a Bolshevik from 1918, chief prosecutor of the USSR from 1935 and Stalin's legal aide in the Communist Party and treason purges; deputy commissar of foreign affairs (1940-49); foreign minister of the USSR from 1949; a major Soviet figure in the United Nations until 1953 when he became permanent Soviet delegate to the United Nations. He died in New York City in 1954.

2. Rossiya – the name of the Russian Empire under the Tsar; all peoples of Rossiya were called Rossiyanye.

### **A Conversation With the Shadow**

\* Translated by Victor Ermolaev.

### **A Defeat in Crimea**

\* Autobiographical.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

### **A Man Reborn**

\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. Endearing diminutive of Mama.

2. Diminutive of Mama.

3. Endearing diminutive of Lyalya.

### **A Mining Engineer**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

\*\* Mair Elizabeth Owen

1. The objective was to substitute the old specialists from the old middle class with the new generation of specialists from the proletarian class by intensely training them in various fields of industry and national economy.

### **A Musical Story**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

### **About the American Help to Russian People**

\* Translated by Olga Santiago.

### **About the Author – Biographical Note**

1. The complete biography of Orest Mikhaylovich Gladky could be found in soon to be published memoirs *Caught in the Web of History*.

### **Abundance**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Khrushchev, Malenkov, Mikhoyan – top Communist party and Soviet government bosses.

### **According to the Plan**

\* Translated by Jan P. Wasilewsky

### **Addition to the Story "An Ingenious Dummy"**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

### **After The Battle**

\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See story "Volunteers."

2. Small villages.

### **An Act of Despair**

\* Family history.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See story "Wrangelyevyets."
2. GPU – acronym for Gosudarstvennoye Politiceskoye Upravlyeniye - The State Political Department.

### **An Ingenious Dummy**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

### **An Uninvited Guest**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

1. State Secret Police.

### **A Socialist Lunch**

\* Translated by Jan P. Wasilewsky.

1. Rotten intelligentsia – the old intelligentsia from the pre-revolutionary time.
2. Deported to the concentration camps in Siberia.
3. Narpit – Narodnoye pitaniye – People's nourishment

### **A Socialist Settlement**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. A communist coal miner honored for some of his party deeds.
2. Versta – an old Russian measurement of about 1.06 kilometers or 0.6629 miles.
3. Voluntary, unpaid work on a day off, usually Sunday.
4. Voluntary, unpaid work on a day off, usually Saturday.
5. Worker's faculty – a school for adult workers equivalent to high school.
6. "To answer the call of nature" or "To spend a penny."
7. Stakhanov – a worker in the Soviet Union who regularly surpassed the production quotas and whose name was used by the government to call all workers to follow his example to increase the production.

whose name was used by the government to call all workers to follow his example to increase the production.

### **At the Ticket Office**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Makhorka – home-grown shag used extensively by ordinary Russians for smoking in hand-rolled cigarettes wrapped in a piece of paper, mostly torn from a newspaper.
2. NKVD – People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs – Soviet secret police.

### **Because He Was Right**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

### **Beloved Leader**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

### **Beri-Ya, Beri-Ty**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. "Beri-ya" – In Russian means "I take" – is used here as a play on words with the name of Lavrentiy P. Beriia who was the chief of the Soviet secret police under Stalin. He was responsible for uncounted purges and deaths of innocent people branded "the enemies of the people." However, he himself was eventually arrested and executed after Stalin's death.

2. "Beri-ty" – In Russian means "You take."

3. Molotov, Malenkov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev – members of Communist party and Soviet Government.

4. Dzhugashvili – real last name of Joseph Stalin.

5. Malenkov became Prime Minister after Stalin's death.

6. CheKa – acronym for Chresvychaynaya Kommissiya, The Extraordinary Commission that acted as secret police against counter-revolutionaries from 1917-1921.

7. Anyone who was suspected to be against the soviet government and anti-communist was considered to be the "enemy of the people."

8. Name given to the pre-revolutionary landowning gentry and is applied here to the new ruling "bosses" – the communists.

### **Bolsheviks in Feodosia**

\* Autobiographical.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See chapter "A Defeat in Crimea."

2. CheKa – acronym for Chresvychaynaya Kommissiya, The Extraordinary Commission that acted as secret police against counterrevolutionaries from 1917-1921.



3. See chapter "Nikon Palich."

### **Brothers**

\* Translated by Jan P. Wasilewsky.

1. Gymnasium – a classical school preparatory to universities in pre-revolutionary Russia and Europe.

2. Gubsovnarkhoz's – a Regional Soviet People's Economy.

3. Uchkprodkollegia's – an educational board.

4. Gubnarobraz's – a Regional People's Educational Department.

5. Droshki – a light open four-wheeled vehicle used in Russia, in which the passengers sit sideways on a long narrow bench.

6. Large Cossack villages.

7. GPU – Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye – State political secret police.

8. Serednyachka – a woman peasant of average means.

9. Chekist – an agent of CheKa, a secret police.

### **Buryonushka on Strike**

\* Translated by Daniel Portis.

### **By Force of Inertia**

\* Translated by Jan P. Wasilewsky.

### **Captain Rakitin**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

### **Christmas Joy**

\* Translated by Marina Dmitrieva.

1. Work-day – a unit of work on the collective farms.

2. Kolkhoz – collective farm.

3. Pood – old Russian measuring unit equal to about 36 pounds.

4. Any individual suspected to be thinking or behaving against the communist state was branded "the enemy of the people."

### **Comrade Zhivodiyev**

\* Translated by Victor Ermolaev.

### **Concordia**

\* Translated by Olga Santiago.

1. Wonder world – in French.

2. Markovtsy – volunteers from the White Army units named after General Sergey Leonidovich Markov, one of the founders of Volunteer Army counter-revolutionary force in the southern Russia during Russian Civil War.

3. Kornilovets – volunteer from the Kornilov Division, one of the crack units of the White Army, it was named after General Lavr Georgiyevich Kornilov, the military commander of the anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army.

4. Popular singer of those days.

5. Alekseyevets – volunteer from the White Army unit named after the General Mikhail Vasiliyevich Alekseyev who formed the basis of the White Volunteer Army.

6. Shishkov – famous Russian painter.

7. Drozdovets – volunteer from the White Army unit named after General Mikhail Gordeyevich Drozdovsky. The Drozdovsky Division was well known for its fighting spirit and esprit de corps.

8. Sovdepia – a derisive name for Soviet Union.

9. Budyenovtsy – soldiers from the Red Army battalion under the command of Red General Budyenny. Also see the story "Nata."

10. GPU – acronym for Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye - The State Political Department, secret police.

11. Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, a revolutionary, famous as the founder of the Bolsheviks organ, the CheKa, and later known by many names during the history of the Soviet Union. The agency became notorious for large-scale human rights abuses, including torture and mass executions, carried out during the Red Terror and the Russian Civil War.

12 CheKa – Extraordinary Commission, a secret police preceding GPU.

### **Criminals**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

1. A term of German imperialism – a territory for political and economic expansion.
2. Ukrainian nationalist soldier.

#### **Cross and Needle**

- \* Family history.
- \*\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.
- 1. Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye – The State secret police.

#### **Cunning Dodger**

- \* Translated by Olena Volkova.
- 1. ZER – zakryty raspredyatel – an out-of-bounds distributor of food and all kinds of goods exclusively for party members not accessible to the general population.
- 2. Chervontsy – Ten rubles bank-notes.

#### **Curiosity Is a Sin**

- \* Translated by Natalie Bayer.
- 1. Peoples Commissariat of the Internal Affairs – the state secret police in the Soviet Union.

#### **Dear Cow's Business**

- \* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.
- 1. Orach – plant of goosefoot family.
- 2. Stakhanov's movement – a method in the Soviet Union of increasing production by rewarding the workers who fulfill and over fulfill the production quotas established by the government. The miner Stakhanov was the first to be proclaimed for this as a hero and was used by the soviet government as an example for all workers.

#### **Dung-Seasons Coat**

##### **"Dears"**

- \* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.
- 1. "Dear" and "dears" are the most overused words in the Soviet press in referring to the leaders and other dignitaries.
- 2. MGB – one of the names for the Soviet Secret police—CheKa, NKVD, KGB, MGB.

#### **Drozdovsky Regiment March**

- \* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.
- 1. A. A. Gairabetov, A variant of Drozdovskys Regiment March, *Sbornik Voennykh Pyeseyen*, (in Russian), publ. newsp Rossiya, New York. USA. 1970. A book was a gift from A. A. Gairabetov to O. M. Gladky with permission to use selected text in his writings. Translated by Olga Gladky Verro, edtd by Oliver W. Kellogg, 2009.

#### **Dung-Seasons Coat**

- \* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.
- 1. "the vigilant eye," – sarcastic way to name the secret police.
- 2. CPSU(B) – Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks).
- 3. "Esesera" – folks sarcastic way to say USSR by distorting spelling and pronunciation of the letters.
- 4. In Soviet Union all shops belonged to the State.
- 5. Cockatoo – a parrot Cockatoo.
- 6. No one would check on how he spends his time on business trip.
- 7. Anyone who could have been suspected of being against the Soviet authority was branded "the enemy of the people."
- 8. Plyushkin was a character in Nikolai Gogol's novel "Dead Souls." He had an untidy appearance and wore large shabby clothing.
- 9. People's commissariats.
- 10. A worker who was made by the government as an example of dedicated work to building socialism by over-fulfilling his state imposed work norm.

#### **Easter in the Catacombs**

- \* Autobiographical.
- \*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.
- 1. Russians – people of any nationality native or inhabiting on the territory of Russia.
- 2. Narobras – acronym for Otdyel Narodnogo Obrazovaniya – Office of Peoples Education.
- 3. A small keyboard organ in which the tones are produced by forcing air through metal reeds by means of bellows operated by pedals.

4. Member of the White Guard, a name coined by the Bolsheviks for anybody who served in the White Army.

5. Lishenyets – an individual who is deprived of civil rights.

6. Lenin – revolutionary leader of the Bolshevik faction during the Russian Revolution of 1918.

7. Gorpartcom – acronym for Gorodskoy Partyiny Komitet – The Town's Party's Committee.

8. Special Easter cake.

9. Decorated Easter eggs in Ukrainian.

10. The Christ is risen! – Russian Orthodox Easter greetings.

11. Indeed He is risen! – Russian Orthodox reply to Easter greetings.

#### **For Bread Alone**

\* Translated by Alex Slyuseranskiy.

#### **For The Truth**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne

#### **Foreword – Peasants' Plight**

\* Written by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. The chapter draws factual information, names, places, and dates from Sheila Fitzpatrick *The Russian Revolution: 1917-1932*, 2nd ed, Bungay, Suffolk, Great Britain: Richard Clay/Chaucer Press, 1985. Oxford University Press.

2. Kollektivnoye khozyaystvo – collective farm.

3. Village community and its council.

4. Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Politika – New Economic Policy.

5. Called gulags.

6. See chapter "Meeting On the Farmstead"

#### **From the Past**

\* Translated by Tanya Cronau.

1. Donbas - abbreviated form of Donets Basin, a coal mines region in Eastern Ukraine.

2. Elective district office in pre-revolutionary Russia.

3. A gymnasium is a secondary education school preparatory for university in pre-revolutionary Russia.

4. Acronym of the Communist Youth League.

5. Traditional headdress of bishops in Christian churches.

#### **Geniuses**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Alexander F. Kerensky – Head of Russian Provisional Government between the February Revolution of 1917 and October Revolution of 1918 – between the Tsar and Bolsheviks.

2. Collective leadership – Leadership of Soviet Union immediately after the death of Joseph Stalin.

3. Andrey Melnik – Ukrainian Nationalist, Head of OUN – Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in Western Ukraine before World War Two in Europe – and of Ukrainian émigré organization after the War.

4. Stepan Bandera – Ukrainian Nationalist, Head of OUN – Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in Western Ukraine before and during World War Two in Europe.

5. Evgeniy Gegechkori – Georgian Nationalist, Head of NGG – National Government of Georgia in Exile 1953-54, killed by the Soviet NKVD headed by Beria.

6. Henry Dobryansky – Major, first partisan Polish Guerilla Commander in World War Two.

#### **Growing Needs**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Esesera – derisive pronunciation of word USSR.

2. DP – acronym for the Displaced Persons after the World War Two.

3. Stakhanov – the worker in Soviet Union who regularly surpassed the production quota of work.

#### **Hartford**

\* Translated by Olga Santiago.

1. Sovdepia – derisive name for Soviet Union.

2. Rabfak – worker's faculty – educational institution for adult workers preparatory for entrance to the higher institutions of learning.

3. In Russian the word 'vowels' spelled – "glasnye" is a double entendre with the "glasnye" – members of the city дума—a pre-revolutionary city government organ and also with "glasnye" – those who openly disagree or do not consent.

### **Have You Heard?**

\* Translated by Alex Slyuseranskiy.

1. Labourists – members of British Labour Party.
2. Clement Attlee – British statesman, prime minister (1945-1951)
3. Georgiy M. Malenkov – Premier of the Soviet Union (1953-1955)
4. Nikita S. Khrushchev – Premier of the Soviet Union (1958-1964)
5. Metro – the underground subway.
6. Chou-Enlai – Chinese Communist Leader, premier (1949-1976)
7. Mao Tze Tong – Chairman of the Communist Party (1943-1976), Chairman of the Peoples

Republic of China (1949-1959)

### **Highly Educated Pedagogues**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

### **His Damned Highness**

\* Translated by Natalie Bayer.

### **Hypotenuse**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

### **I Believe**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne and by Tanya Cronau.

### **“I’ll Dispossess You”**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

### **In Honour of Tricentenary**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. “That” world – author means the USSR.
2. Esesera – the derisive name the people call USSR.
3. “Stakhanov – a worker in the USSR who continuously over-fulfills his norm.
4. The first of May a labor day in the USSR.
5. Kronstadt – a fortress in St. Petersburg.

### **In Malenkov’s Farce Show**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

### **In Prison**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. A Russian peasant.
2. Themselves, since those were their real last names: Dzhugashvili, Skryabin, and Ulyanov.
3. Russian proverb adopted by the Bolsheviks to point out that in socialist society there is no privileged class.
4. Encavedist – a derisive name for the agent of NKVD – People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs.
5. Former member of CheKa, a secret state police in the early years of Soviet Union.

### **In the Pale-Blue Semi-darkness**

\* Translated by Tanya Cronau.

1. A place in the Ukrainian peasant cottages, called an “over-the-oven” nook, was located high over the baking oven and next to its chimney. It was a wide and roomy chamber with an opening so that one could climb up into it by stepping on a bench. It provided a large, warm place where all the children slept on a layer of soft hemp or hay.

### **In the Waiting Room**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

### **Ingenious Project**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. The names used throughout this story are of all major political players struggling for power in the aftermath of Josef Stalin’s death when for the short time there was a collective leadership in the USSR.

### **Is It Any of Your Business?**

\* Translated by Alex Slyuseranskiy.

1. Lugansk – town in the South Eastern Ukraine.

### **It happened at a Showing of “Battleship Potyemkin”**

\* Translated by James Weller.

1. Komsomol – Young Communists League.
2. Pioneer – Young Pioneer (Communist) school age children organization.
3. Vasyl'ko – diminutive for the name Vasyl in Ukrainian.
4. Summer 1905 rebellion of sailors from the battleship “Potyemkin” from the Russian Black Sea Fleet, after which the rebels were sent by the Tsar’s court in exile to Siberia.

### **It Is Stifling Here**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

### **Komsomol Member Kulya**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Komsomol – Youth Communists League.
2. Nizhniy Novgorod is an ancient Russian town.
3. Demyan Berdnyy was a Ukrainian poet.
4. Pavlik Morozov was the son of a well-to-do farmer—the so called “kulak” – who was considered to be “the enemy of the people”—who was allegedly killed by his family for denouncing his father to the political police. He was glorified by Soviet propaganda as a hero and a martyr for his deed.

### **Lidka**

- \* Family history.
- \*\* Translated by Olga Santiago.
- 1. See story “Defeat in Feodosia.”
- 2. Affectionate and diminutive of Lidia.
- 3. Lidka – pejorative and casual name for Lida.
- 4. Bor’ka– pejorative and casual name for Boris.
- 5. Home brew.
- 6. Diminutive or affectionate name of Boris.

### **Lyamp**

- \* Translated by James Weller.
- 1. Skobelevsky – name of one of the Tsar’s regiments.
- 2. Shevchenko – Ukrainian poet who wrote in language used by common people.
- 3. Skrypnyk – a controversial minister of Culture in Ukraine who meddled by imposing his version of Ukrainian language and quickly disappeared as the “enemy of the people.”

### **Martha Ignatyevna**

- \* Transl. W. Kate Hyne. 1. *Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye* – The State Political Department.
- 2. Shock-worker, a worker who excelled in voluntary increase of production.

### **Marvelous Vision**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

### **Medieval Execution**

- \* Autobiographical.
- \*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

### **Meditation Before Easter**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

### **Meeting On the Farmstead**

- \* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.
- 1. See the story “The Dispossessed.”
- 2. Comrade.
- 3. Agitator-propagandist.
- 4. Uncle, or any man, as used by common people.
- 5. Aunt, or any woman, as used by common people.
- 6. A plural of condescending and diminutive of muzhyk.
- 7. The slogan by Vladimir Illich Lenin: “In every home shall shine the electric light bulb of Illich.”
- 8. Name coined by the Soviets to the well-to-do farmers to scoff them as the “enemies of the people.”
- 9. Kulak's sympathizer.

### **Mob Justice**

- \* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.
- 1. Also in “Vadim Kuzenko and His Parents” in *Branded An Enemy of the People*.

2. Nickname for the name Vadim.
3. See "Volunteers."
4. Large city and port on the shore of the Black Sea in southern Ukraine.
5. See "Nata" and "Defeat in Crimea."
6. Name given by the soviets to persons returning from abroad after having escaped from the Reds during the revolution and the civil war.
7. Cottage.
8. Old town in Siberia, northeast of Novosibirsk.
9. "Give out," a common expression meaning that the state store is selling something that is usually not available on their shelves.

#### **Nata**

- \* Autobiographical.
- \*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.
- 1. The so-called Salty Sea, east of Perikop.
- 2. See "Volunteers" and "After the Battle."
- 3. A town located north of Perikop.
- 4. The Putrid Swamp.
- 5. Budyennyets – soldier in the Red Cavalry Division of Bolshevik General Budyenny.
- 6. The word "offizer" (officer) as mispronounced by populace.
- 7. Plural of budyennyets.
- 8. The host of the house.
- 9. Shag – coarsely shredded home-grown tobacco.
- 10. The hostess of the house.
- 11. A Russian shirt with a side fastening and a stand-up collar.
- 12. Small hinged casement windowpane used for ventilation.

#### **Near Saur's Grave**

- \* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

#### **Nikitka's Dream**

- \* Translated by Natalie Bayer.
- 1. Pood – Russian weight measure equal to about 36 pounds avoirdupois, 16 Kg.
- 2. Author tries to imitate the way Nikitka speaks with unfinished sentences.
- 3. Kolyma and Vorkuta are known places where were located the concentration camps in the Soviet Union.

#### **Nikon Palich**

- \* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

#### **On the Border**

- \* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.
- 1. People used "He" rather than his name Stalin, afraid to be overheard saying something negative about him, for fear of imprisonment or worse.
- 2 It is difficult to express the full meaning of the Russian expression, "Rein" and all of its overtones in this instance. It is idiomatic speech relating to what occurs when a wagon driver slaps a horse's rump with a rein (whip). Simply, it is very painful for the horse.
- 3. Vissarionovich was Stalin's Russian patronymic name, i.e., his father's first name.
- 4. Given to Stalin.
- 5. Most of these people were Russian born or lived there all their adult lives.
- 6. Kuzkin is derived from Kuzka, a beetle that damaged the Russian wheat crops. Another derivative, Kuzkina mat' (or Kuzka's mother) is not translatable but relates to a manner of making a threat.
- 7. The author is conveying that the socialist regime is blaming this reduction in production on the aforementioned, "spy-sharks."
- 8. Author uses sarcastic name for "attachés."
- 9. Sobachevka – village's name could be translated as a "Dog's Place" – some small obscure and poor village of unknown location.
- 10. Freight cars.
- 11. Again, the author is being sarcastic. These were not guards for the security and well-being of the passengers, rather they were guards to make sure none of the passengers tried to escape.
- 12. "Esesera" is a folk's disparaging name made of play of letters from the acronym SSSR – the

Russian equivalent of USSR.

13. Ryzhik was a folk's term for gold coin of the Tsarist era.

### **On the Road**

\* Translated by Marina Dmitrieva.

1. Chrezsvychainaya Kommissiya, the state secret police organization (1917-1922).

2. Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye, the state secret police organization (1922-1934).

3. Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Dyel, the state secret police organization (1934-1946).

4. Ministyerstvo Vnutrennikh Dyel, Ministry of Internal Affairs.

5. Ministyerstvo Gosudarstvennoy Byesopasnosti, Ministry of State Security functioning as state secret police organization (1946-1953).

6. The so-called "bag-carrying" people assaulted the railroads. They carried bags full of any kind of provisions they could find in the countryside to bring home in towns where the shortages of food forced people to search and barter everything they owned.

### **On Vacation**

\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See "Hamlet of Kisyelyevka" in *Branded An Enemy of the People*, Part "The revenge of the Reds..

2. See "The Extraordinary Meeting" in *Branded An Enemy of the People*, Part "The revenge of the Reds..

3. Rabochy cooperative – Workers' Cooperative, a misnomer, because it was, like everything else in the Soviet Union, owned by the state.

4. See "Digging Into My Father's Past" in *Branded An Enemy of the People*, Part "The revenge of the Reds..

5. Raypartcom – acronym for Rayonny Partiyny Komitet – The Regional Party Committee.

### **Percentages**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

1. Stakhanovite movement – a labor movement of a shock-work organized by the soviet authorities to speed up work and production. Originates from a worker Stakhanov who did a shock-work, work fast and well.

### **Petrushka**

\* Family history

\*\* Translated by Natalie Bayer.

### **Proletarian Justice**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. Chekist – an agent of CheKa, Soviet government secret police organization in the early years after the revolution.

2. Party Committee

3. Professional Committee

### **Prologue – A Socialist Settlement**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. A communist coal miner honored for some of his party deeds.

2. Versta – an old Russian measurement of about 1.06 kilometers or 0.6629 miles.

3. Voluntary, unpaid work on a day off, usually Sunday.

4. Voluntary, unpaid work on a day off, usually Saturday.

5. Worker's faculty – a school for adult workers equivalent to high school.

6. "To answer the call of nature" or "To spend a penny."

7. Stakhanov – a worker in the Soviet Union who regularly surpassed the production quotas and whose name was used by the government to call all workers to follow his example to increase the production.

### **Prologue – In Whose Name?**

\* Translated by Alex Slyuseranskiy.

1. "Your fingers smell of incense" – a song composed by Alexander Vertinsky in 1916 and dedicated to the dead Russian silent film actress Vera Kholodnaya.

### **Prologue – My Sweet Friend**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. Partkom – (Communist) Party Committee/

2. CheKa – The state secret police organization in the Soviet Union (1917-1922).
3. Chekist – agent of CheKa
4. Makhno – A leader of the Ukrainian separatist army during the Russian civil war (1920-21).
5. Kulak – A pejorative name for a well-to-do peasant in the Soviet Union.
6. Serednyak – A peasant of average means.

#### **Prologue – To Store Eternally**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

#### **Red-cheeked Trousers**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

1. Donbass – Donetsk Basin – a coal deposits region in Eastern Ukraine.
2. Odessa – a city on the Black Sea in Ukraine.
3. “obtained” – to obtain means to know someone who knows when the desired merchandise

arrives in the co-op and stay several nights in line and hope that it will be enough when your turn finally comes.

#### **Rewards**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

#### **Saving Ourselves**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

#### **Skillfully**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Joseph Stalin.
2. The two most used words when referring to Stalin in Soviet press and public meetings.
3. “Our Father” – the name used in referring to Joseph Stalin in Soviet press and public meetings.

#### **Smoked Rib**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Ptichkin-Pevichkin – could be translated in English as Bird’s-Singer.
2. Vorobyshkina – could be translated in English as Sparrow’s.
3. Evrabkop – abbreviated from Evpatoria’s Workers’ Cooperative.
4. Evgorispolkom – abbreviated from Evpatoria’s Municipal Executive Committee.
5. Evkomunkhoz – abbreviated from Evpatoria’s Communal Management.
6. Evryba – abbreviated from Evpatoria’s Fish.
7. Evnarpit – abbreviated from Evpatoria’s People’s Nutrition.
8. kulaks – name branded on the well-to-do peasants by the Soviet government.
9. Novnarpit – abbreviated from Novorossiysk’s People’s Nutrition.

#### **Soar Falcons, as Eagles do!..**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. Popasny, Bakhmut and other named places are located in the South-Eastern part of the Ukraine.
2. From a known at that time group performing popular songs and dances.
3. All excerpts from the songs were taken with permission from A. A. Gairabetov, “Sbornik

Voennykh Pyesyen,” (in Russian) publisher newsp Rossiya, New York. USA. 1970.

#### **Stakhanovshchina Without Enthusiasm**

\* Translated by Olga Santiago.

1. Stakhanov – name of a worker who did a shock-work, work fast and well.
2. Stakhanovshchina – a labor movement of a shock-work organized by the soviet authorities to speed up production.
3. Komsomol – Young Communists League.
4. The enkavedists – the agents of NKVD, the Peoples Commissariat of Internal Affairs – the

Soviet government’s secret police.

#### **Stupid Uncultured Broad**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

#### **Successful Escape**

\* Translated by Victor Ermolaev.

1. CheKa – the Extraordinary Committee for the fight against the counter-revolutionaries and profiteers.

2. Zavalinka – small mound of earth along the outer walls protruding from the foundation of peasant’s cottage in Ukraine.



## **Tanya**

\* Translated by Janine Kagle.

## **The Announcer's Voice**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. In the Soviet Union.
2. "Aria from opera "I Pagliacci" by Leoncavallo.

## **The Banner of White Armies Young Volunteers**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

1. Places in Southern Russia where the White Armies fought the Red Armies during Russian Civil War of 1920-1921.

2. The names of White armies originating from the commanding officers names during the Russian Civil War of 1920-1921.

## **The Black Raven**

\* Family history.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. The two letters that the new Soviet government had relinquished from the Russian alphabet as symbols of the old Church Slavic language. Both letters were a part of the old spelling of word "khlyeb" [bread].

## **The Changes**

\* Translated by James Weller.

1. Georgiy M. Malenkov – Premier of the Soviet Union (1953-1955) after the death of Joseph Stalin.

## **The Clever Editor**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

1. Shalyapin – the famous Russian bass opera singer in the beginning of 1900's.

## **The Count**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

## **The Day**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Stakhanov – a worker who over performed the norms of production and Soviet government named after him the whole movement of "enthusiastic" workers.

2. Esesera – a popular mocking pronunciation of spelling USSR.

3. Names of members of collective leadership in the Soviet Union after the Stalin's death.

## **The Dispossessed**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

1. Dispossessed well-to-do farmer.

2. A town in Siberia where many concentration camps were located.

3. Forced transfer from private to the collective ownership of farmland.

4. Nickname for the name Tymofyey.

5. Plural and benevolent diminutive of muzhyk.

6. Collective farmers.

7. Otdyel Narodnogo Obrasovaniya – The Office of Popular Education.

8. Kollektivnoye khozyaistvo - Collective farm.

9. Woman (in Ukrainian).

10. Feminine of word kulak.

11. Diminutive and derisive form of name kulak.

## **The East is Aflame**

\* Translated by Jan P. Wasilewsky.

1. MVD – Ministry of Internal Affairs – Soviet secret police.

2. The official newspaper of the Communist Party in USSR.

3. The official newspaper of the Soviet Government.

4. Komsomol – the Young Communists League.

## **The First Collective Farm Year**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

1. Followers of Trotsky who were declared the "enemies of the people" because they didn't support the Bolshevik faction.

2. Label attached to those who were suspected to be on the right of the Bolshevik faction of the Party and thus were labeled the “enemies of the people.”

3. Label attached to those who were suspected to be on the left of the Bolshevik faction of the Party and thus were labeled the “enemies of the people”.

4. Old Russian measurement, equivalent to approximately 0.6629 mile.

5. GPU – G(osudarstvennoye) P(oliticheskoye) Upravlyeniye) – the state political secret police organization in the Soviet Union after the CheKa and before the NKVD.

#### **The Fog**

\* Translated by Natalie Bayer.

1. Vorkuta – an extreme northeast region above the Arctic Circle in the Soviet Union where some concentration camps were located.

#### **The Forgotten Letter**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

#### **The Glove Affair**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

#### **The Incident With Comrade Zhulicov’s Bed**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

#### **The Last Encounter**

\* Autobiographical.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See “In the Waiting Room.”

2. Former member of the White Guard. Name coined by the Bolsheviks for any person who fought in the White Army during the revolution and civil war in Russia.

#### **The Last Trial**

\* Translated by Olga Santiago.

#### **The May Day**

\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

1. “Rotten West” – communist propaganda’s cliché referring in general terms to the Western countries.

2. “Wench Freedom” – in Russian grammar the nouns have a gender and the noun “freedom” has a feminine gender. In this case the author uses gender sarcastically by applying personification to represent “freedom” in a form of a woman.

3. Vaska Rekhov – represents a common man who had learned well and embraced the revolutionary teachings.

4. February Russian Revolution of 1917 which forced the Tsar to abdicate The first Russian Provisional Government from July-October 1917 was dominated by the Socialist Revolutionary Party with infamous Alexander Kerensky as a head of the Russian Provisional Government. With the Bolshevik October Revolution of October 1918 he was forced to flee the country and spent the rest of his life abroad, mostly in the United States.

5. Author sarcastically refers to the unqualified men who became representatives of the Russian Provisional Government.

6. Felix Dzerzhinsky – was a Commissar for Internal Affairs and head of CheKa – the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (1917-1922).

7. Chekist – an agent of CheKa – a state secret police.

8. OPTCheKa – a railway department of CheKa.

#### **The Mocking Fate**

\* Translated by Jan P. Wasilewsky.

1. Mestcoms – local committees.

2. Profcoms – professional unions committees.

3. Osoviakhims – mocking name of some soviet organization invented by this woman.

4. Moprakhs – mocking name of some soviet organization invented by this woman.

5. Study circles – obligatory sessions to study Communist Party history.

6. Partorg – party organizer

7. Stakhanovite – a worker in the Soviet Union who regularly surpasses production quotas and specially honored and rewarded with medals and economic privileges.

8. Oblpartcom – Oblastnoy partiyny commitet – regional party committee.

### **The Most Democratic Election**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. "Esesera – a derisive pronunciation of USSR used by the common folks.
2. Komsomol – the Young Communist League – a Communist organization for youth.
3. Stakhanovite – the worker who follows the comrade Stakhanov example by voluntarily increasing his production of the established quota of work.
4. The "Most Wise" – how Joseph Stalin was called in Soviet press and during the meetings.
5. Octobers – the preschool children and school age Pioneers – were the Communist organizations for children.

### **The Noble Hearts**

\* Autobiographical.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See "Medieval Execution."
2. A name coined by the Bolsheviks to the members of the White Guards.
3. Endearing of Mama.

### **The Portrait of a Boor**

\* Translated by Alex Slyuseranskiy.

1. Foreign Minister of Soviet Union.
2. First names of the Bolshevik leaders in the Kremlin.

### **The Prophet**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. "True prophet" – Joseph Stalin.
2. The famous quotation by Joseph Stalin.
3. Names of revolutionaries eliminated by the Bolsheviks in the struggle for power.

### **The Public Prosecutor**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

1. An official spelling of the acronym VKP(b) – All Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks).
2. Joseph Stalin.
3. Forty Centigrade is equal to 104 Fahrenheit. Normal body temperature is 37 C.
4. Common phrase referring to anyone suspected to be unfriendly to the Communist Party or to the Soviet Government.

### **The Sleep-Walker**

\* Translated by Mair Elizabeth Owen.

### **The Steppe Is Calling**

\* Translated by Natalie Bayer.

1. The name used for the leader of the Communist Party Joseph Stalin as a "Father" to the people of the Soviet Union to convey his benevolent image but the people used it in a mocking way.
2. 'Comrades-in-arms' – comrades to the Stalin himself – the prison guards.
3. Shortages of food and consumer goods were part of life in the Soviet Union and were distributed with coupons.
4. Kulak – the name given to the well-to-do farmer during the collectivization period in the Soviet Union.

### **The Stakhanovite Movement**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

1. Stakhanovite movement – propaganda campaign in the Soviet Union named after the coal miner Stakhanov who voluntarily surpassed production quotas. Stakhanovite workers were specially honored and rewarded.
2. How Joseph Stalin was called in the Soviet press and public meetings.
3. Another cliché phrase for Joseph Stalin.
4. Paraphrasing the famous Stalin's phrase.

### **The Story of Comrade Suffermuch**

\* Translated by W. Kate Hyne.

### **The Unexpected Gift**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

1. Esesera – derisive name people called the USSR.
2. Subbotnik – day when all people went to work on some so called "volunteer" work in the USSR

when ordered by the communist party or government. Usually it happened on the day off, Saturday (Subbota in Russian) or Sunday.

3. P.Z. – Partiyny Zakaz, an acronym for “Party Order.” Shops for party members and government officials. To buy products they had a special P.Z. card. But common people called them in Russian “Po Znakomstvu” or “By acquaintance” cards.

4. “Tridtsatka” – another popular name for shops for party members and government officials.

#### **They Awarded**

\* Translated by Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James.

#### **Trotskyist**

\* Translated by Irena Fridlender.

1. ZER – zakryty raspredyeliteľ – a distributor of food and all kinds of goods for Party members only not accessible to the general population.

#### **Uncle Evlampy**

\* Based on family story.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

#### **Victor Pushkarev**

\* Translated by Olga Santiago.

1. Pavlik Morozov – a boy who betrayed his well-to-do father by informing authorities during the collectivization years and the soviet propaganda was presenting him to children as a patriot for the ideals of soviet government. Recent historians consider this story as being fabricated by the government for propaganda purposes.

2. Stakhanovite – shock worker.

3. The party – Communist Party.

4. GPU – State Political Department.

#### **Volunteers**

\* Autobiographical.

\*\* Translated by Olga Gladky Verro.

1. See “The Noble Hearts.”

2. Armenian Bazaar.

3. An old name for the southern province of Ukraine.

#### **Wrangel’s Army Volunteer**

\* Family history.

\*\* Translated by Olga Turlyanskaya.

1. Vanya is nickname for Ivan.

2. Ivan Gavryilovich is first name and patronymic name of Vanya.

3. Wrangel’s army – the Russian White Army under the command of General Wrangel during the Russian Civil War in 1920-21 fighting the Red Army organized after the Revolution of 1917-18 by the Bolsheviks.

## List of Translators and Translated Stories

**Natalie Bayer:** "The Steppe Is Calling," "Petrushka," "His Damned Highness," "Curiosity Is a Sin," "Nikitka's Dream," "A Conversation With the Death," "The Fog."

**Tanya Cronau:** "In the Pale-Blue Semi-darkness," "I Believe," "From the Past."

**Marina Dmitrieva:** "On the Road," "Christmas Joy."

**Victor Ermolaev:** "Successful Escape," Comrade Zhivodyerov," "A Conversation With the Shadow."

**Irena Fridlender:** "The Clever Editor," "The Public Prosecutor," "The Stakhanovite Movement," "Hypotenuse," "Red-cheeked Trousers," "Stupid Uncultured Broad," "Highly Educated Pedagogues," "The Forgotten Letter," "The Banner of White Armies Young Volunteers," "Trotskyist."

**Olga Gladky Verro:** "The Black Raven," "Medieval Execution," "The Noble Hearts." "After the Battle," "Nata," "A Defeat in Crimea," "Bolsheviks in Feodosia," "An Act of Despair," "The Last Encounter," "A Man Reborn," "Drozdovsky Regiment March," "Foreword – Peasants' Plight," "Meeting On the Farmstead," "On Vacation," "Easter in the Catacombs."

**W. Kate Hyne:** "In the Waiting Room," "The Dispossessed," "I Believe," "For the Truth," "Cross and Needle," "Because He Was Right," "Nikon Palich," "The Count," "The Story of Comrade Suffermuch," "Criminals."

**Steve G. and Zhamilya S. James:** "The Unexpected Gift," "Dung-Seasons Coat," "The Glove Affair," "A Musical Story," "They Awarded," "The Most Democratic Election," "The Incident With Comrade Zhulicov's Bed," "Skillfully," "Dear Cow's Business," "Beloved Leader," "Komsomol Member Kulya," "The Prophet," "On the Border," "Smoked Rib," "To Store Eternally," "Geniuses," "The Announcer's Voice," "Abundance," "The Day," "Ingenious Project," "Marvelous Vision," "Rewards," "Dears," "Growing Needs," "In Honor of the Tricentenary," "At the Ticket Office."

**Janine Kagle:** "Tanya."

**Mair Elizabeth Owen:** "Prologue: A Socialist Settlement," "A Mining Engineer," "Soar Falcons, as Eagles do!..," "The First Collective Farm Year," "Meditation Before Easter," "My Sweet Friend," "Proletarian Justice," "The Sleep-Walker," "In Prison," "Beri-Ya, Beri-Ty—I-Take, You-Take."

**Daniel Portis:** "Buryonushka on Strike."

**Olga Santiago:** "The Last Trial," "Stakhanovshchina Without Enthusiasm," "Concordia," "Victor Pushkarev," "About the American Help to the Russian People," "Hartford," "Lidka."

**Alex Slyuseranskiy:** "In Whose Name?" "For Bread Alone," "The Portrait of a Boor," "Is It Any of Your Business?" "Have You Heard?"

**Olga Turlyanskaya:** "An Ingenious Dummy," "Addition to the Story 'An Ingenious Dummy,'" "The May Day," "Wrangel's Army Volunteer," "Near Saur's Grave," "An Uninvited Guest," "Saving Ourselves," "I'll Dispossess You," "A Mining Engineer," "In Malenkov's Farce Show," "Captain Rakitin," "It Is Stifling Here," "Percentages."

**Olena Volkova:** "Cunning Dodger."

**Jan P. Wasilewsky:** "A Socialist Lunch," "According to the Plan," "The Mocking Fate," "By Force of Inertia," "Brothers," "The East is Aflame."

**James Weller:** "Lyamp," "It Happened at a Showing of 'Battleship Potyemkin,'" "The Changes."

## Olga Gladky Verro – Author and Memoirist

The true stories from *Voices From the Past* served as the starting points for many chapters written and narrated by my father, Orest M. Gladky, and my mother, Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, for our family memoirs: *Caught in the Web of History: Nikita Khrushchev's Teacher and Her Family Remember the Sweep of Events That Destroyed the Life of Millions*. As a first generation immigrant family in America we wanted to leave for future generations what we knew about our ancestors. During the years when we all were busy working and I was raising my children, attending University of Connecticut, writing Ph. D. dissertation and teaching, I collected their stories, translated and wrote them in English. In my retirement years I compiled all this monumental work and added the chapters from my and my husband's, Giulio Verro, life and the chapters about what happened to our family after the end of World War Two from my correspondence with my parents, all preserved by my father.

From this family saga I also compiled three shorter versions for publication:

A biographical collection about the life of my father, Orest M. Gladky: *Branded An Enemy of the People: Selected Stories From the Life of an Immigrant Writer Preserving Facts and Thoughts for Posterity to Pause and Ponder*.

The memoirs of my mother's Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky: *Nikita S. Khrushchev's Teacher Remembers: With Rare Insight Into Politically Formative Years of a Former Leader of the Soviet Union and Later Encounter and Contact With Her Famous Student*.

My husband's, Giulio Verro, and my memoirs of World War Two: *Chance, Destiny or the Will of God: The Love Story of a Russian Girl and an Italian Prisoner of War in Germany* –

*With Rare Data of Operations from a Book of Flight of a Squadron in the Italian Legionary Air Force in the Spanish Civil War*.

Information about these works may be found at: [www.OlgaGladkyVerro.com](http://www.OlgaGladkyVerro.com)

– Olga Gladky Verro, editor, author and memoirist.

